

# PLUCK AND LUCK

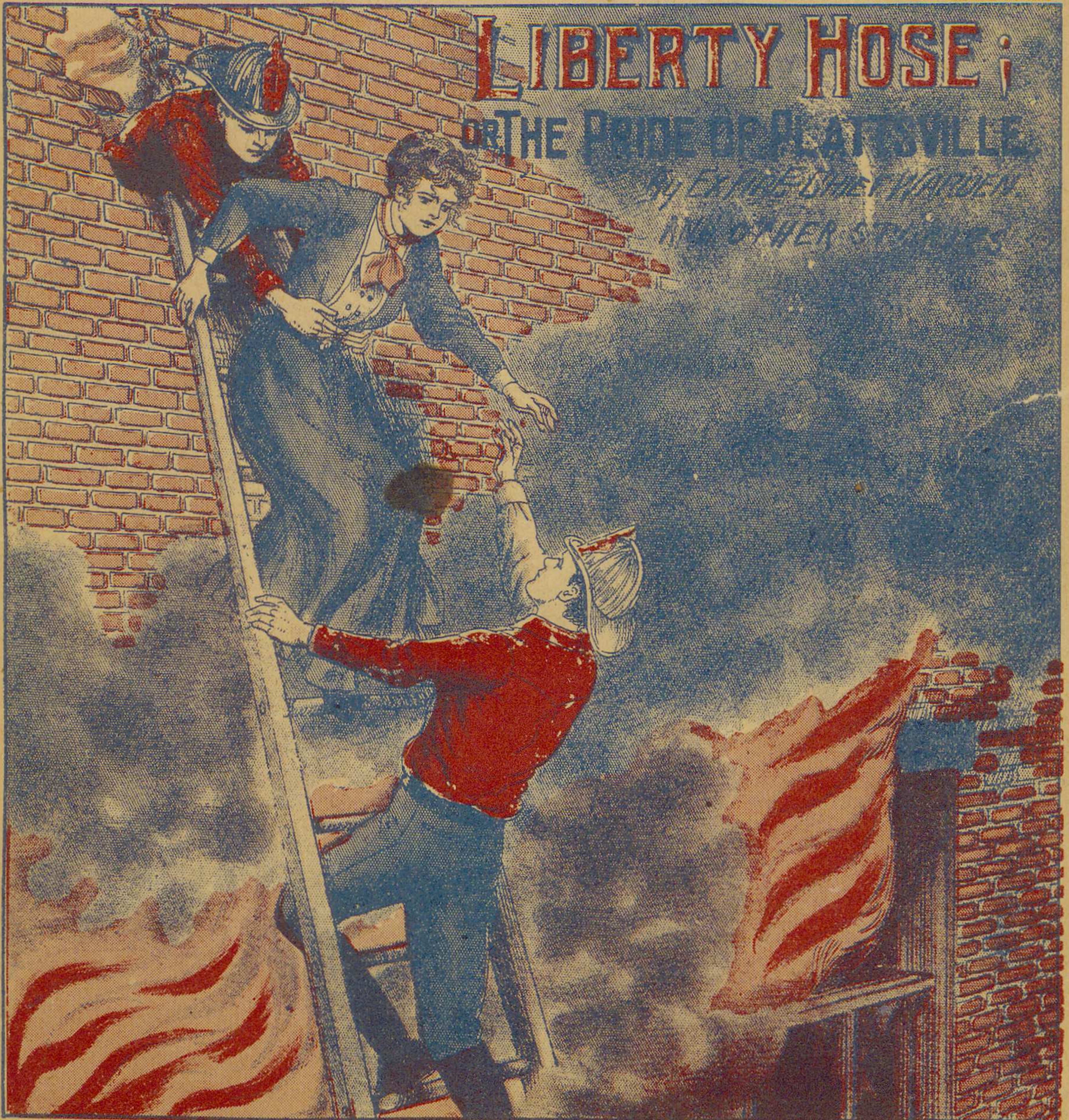
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"Let me help you through the opening." She held up her arms for him to take her, and he helped her, feet foremost, through the opening so that she succeeded in getting on the ladder. One of the Libertys was below.



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# PLUCK AND LUCK

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## LIBERTY HOSE

### OR, THE PRIDE OF PLATTSVILLE

By EX-FIRE CHIEF WARDEN

#### CHAPTER I.—The Members of Liberty Hose No. 1.

On the evening of a warm day one summer all the members of Liberty Hose No. 1 were seated in the engine-house, village of Plattsville, State of New York. As the doors of the apartment were open the lights of the lanterns on the walls would have displayed to the passerby the forms and bronzed faces of twenty firemen, ranging from nineteen to thirty years of age. The foreman, Ned Tibbits, was a tall, wiry young man of twenty-two, with an eye like a hawk's, and a face which, although not handsome, had an expression of blended energy and good nature, which would at once have prepossessed any stranger in his favor.

Ned was a great favorite with the other members. He was always ready with a song or a joke to pass away the time, and while he was not at all quarrelsome, there was no man more ready than he to resent an intentional insult. In fact, in that latter respect all the members of Liberty Hose were alike. Had you seen them sitting there in a semi-circle about their hose carriage, you would have guessed they were a plucky lot of fellows, from the spirited, manly look of every face. The room they occupied was a large one on the first floor of a flat-roofed brick house. It was scrupulously clean, and the fire hats, trumpets, etc., were neatly hung on the walls. The hose carriage, polished until it shone like silver, was the best machine of the kind in Plattsville. It was the pride of the village.

"Come, Ned, strike up!" said one of the Liberties, as the foreman knocked the ashes from a cigar he had been smoking.

"All right!" said Ned. "What will you have?"

"Give us the Bully Smashers!" cried the first speaker.

"Yes, that's it—the Smashers!" said another.

"Go on—go on!" echoed several.

"Very well, gentlemen," said Ned; "if you want your ears 'filled,' I can accommodate you."

In reality Ned was an excellent singer, and soon his full, manly voice was heard as he chanted a rough and ready song about the Bully Smashers, an opposition engine in the village. The song was greeted with much applause. But scarcely had the cheering subsided when a bad egg, thrown with tremendous force from outside, just missed the foreman's head.

"That came from a Smasher!" cried Ned Tibbits.

As he spoke he sprang up and rushed out, followed by several of his companions. They separated, running about in different directions to look for the offender. It was a dark night, but Ned fancied he saw the outlines of a human figure fleeing on along a lane leading off the street. The person, whoever he was, was a swift runner, but he was no match for the nimble foreman, who finally overtook him. Ned could not see his face very well in the gloom.

"Who are you?" he cried, as he collared the fugitive.

"Let go of me!" was uttered in a hoarse voice, "or it will be the worse for you!"

"Come with me to the engine-house, so that we can all have a look at you," said Tibbits, as he drew the other along.

All at once the outline of something bright arose and fell in the darkness. It was a clasp-knife, with a blade about six inches long. The owner had intended to plunge it into his captor's shoulder, but Ned was too quick for him. The point of the keen blade had scarcely pricked his flesh, when he seized the wrist of the hand that held the weapon with an iron grip, and with his boot kicked the instrument from the grasp of its possessor.

"I want my knife! Let me get my knife!" howled the culprit.

"The knife is well enough where it is," answered Tibbits. "Come along!"

The other struggled vainly to release himself, and at last Ned had the satisfaction of dragging him into the engine-house, where the light fell full upon his form and features. He was a small, rough-looking youth of eighteen, with uncombed hair, a flat nose and dirty face and garments.

"A Smasher—a Smasher!" echoed all the men.

"Yes, it's Jack Rann, the brother of Tim Rann, or Baldy Bald, as they call him, the foreman," said Tibbits.

"Why did you throw that egg?" asked one of the men.

"Let me go!" howled the youth, both frightened and angry at the same time. "I didn't do nothin'."

"Yes, you did, and this proves it," said Ned, pulling three or four eggs from the coat pocket of the prisoner. "Now, what have you to say for yourself?"

"I ain't got nothin' to say," answered Jack sullenly.

"What shall we do with him, Liberties?" inquired Tibbits, turning to his men.



"Duck him in the horse pond!"

"No—put him under the pump!"

"I have a proposition to make, gentlemen," said Ned.

"Hear—hear!" cried several.

"Order—order, Liberties!" said Tibbits, as the hubbub of voice continued.

In a moment there was silence. Even Jack Rann, with mouth wide open and distended eyes, stood still to hear his fate.

"You are all aware," began Ned, "that there is a pig-pen close to the Smashers' engine-house?"

"The engine-house itself is a pig-pen!" shouted a voice.

"It is dirty enough for one, at any rate," said Tibbits. "Well, the owner of the pig-pen is old Ben Thompson, who lives in a shanty close to his property. He will be ready enough to lend us one of his pigs for a mere trifle. To this pig we will lash our friend here and send him on to the Smashers!"

"Good—good!" shouted one of the men.

"A pig is too good for him!" cried another.

"I know it," said Ned quickly, "but then we can't find anything worse."

"Brave—bravo!" cried several.

"How are we to get the pig here?" inquired one.

"Ben can bring it to us in his dog cart. I will go and speak for it if the rest of you will take care of the prisoner."

Ned was soon on his way. Ben Thompson's habitation was about a quarter of a mile off. As the foreman passed the engine-house of the Smashers, he could see the members, clad in dirty red shirts, uproariously talking and laughing as they sat on benches smoking and drinking. There was a whole demijohn of grog on a table there, with cards and dice.

"Hope Jack will get rid of all his eggs," said one of the men, as Tibbits, whom they did not recognize in the dim light, passed the open door.

The others laughed.

"If 'twasn't agin the law, I'd like to throw a bombshell in among them Liberties instead of eggs!" said another of the members.

Ned, with a quiet smile, passed on. He knocked at Thompson's door. The proprietor in person opened it for him, and the bargain was soon made. Tibbits went back to the Liberties, and half an hour later Thompson, who was a Welshman, brought the hog—an enormous one—which he dumped in the very door of the engine-house.

"He has brought you the pig," he said, "but if you hurt it, he will have to charge for damages."

So saying, he drove away, while some of the men, having seized the hog, held it firmly in spite of its struggles to break away. At length Jack Rann was firmly lashed to it with ropes, and away went the hog, squeaking viciously as it staggered along with its load. Some of the Liberties followed it part of the way. It made straight for the quarter of the village where its pen was located, its unwilling rider kicking, squirming and howling in his vain effort to free himself. There were but few houses on the road, but the windows of these flew open, and faces were seen peering out inquisitively. The Liberties roared with laughter, especially when an elderly German lady came running out of a small building with a

broom in her hand, and for a while made futile efforts to stop the hog.

At last the young firemen saw the animal approach the engine-house of the Smashers. Out came the latter on hearing the din to discover the situation of one of their members. Words were inadequate to describe the rage of the half drunken gang. They shook their clenched fists in the direction of the quarters of their rivals, and gave utterance to diabolical threats and curses.

## CHAPTER II.—The Firemen's Ball.

On the following night the Liberties met to talk over their arrangements for a ball, which they intended to give at the Plattsville Hotel—a large old-fashioned house kept by a German and his wife by the name of Schwartz.

"I'd recommend each of you to bring a club there, and to fill your pockets with stones," said Ned, laughing.

"Why?" inquired Tom Loper, a spirited young fellow on his right, whose sister Tibbits had always admired as the prettiest girl in the village.

"On account of the Smashers. Depend upon it, they will not leave us alone."

"Schwartz has promised to have policemen there."

"I know he has promised it, but I also know he is too stingy to keep his word. Perhaps he thinks his wife is equal to two policemen."

"She's a whopper, that's a fact. Do you remember the time she whipped one of the Smashers for breaking her ginger beer bottle?"

"Yes; she could whip two men any day. She is as strong as an elephant. Wouldn't be a bad plan to have her for one of our members."

"That wouldn't do. She weighs nearly two hundred pounds, and could fight better than she could run."

"Well, laying all joking aside, I hope Schwartz will have the police there, for the ladies' sake. They would be frightened to death in case of trouble."

As Ned spoke, the beautiful face of Fanny Loper, whom he intended to escort to the ball, arose before his mind. He did not like the idea of anything occurring to frighten her or mar her pleasure in the slightest degree.

"The worst of it is there are no policemen within ten miles of here," said Tom Loper. "However, to make a sure thing of it, I will go and engage a few to come, after I leave my office."

"That will not be until six o'clock; the ball opens at nine."

"I think I can get back in time."

As all the other men had business which would keep them until a still later hour, Loper's plan was agreed upon. On the next day, at nine o'clock, the ball party was present. It was held in a large room on the second floor, decorated with garlands of flowers, and with the words "Liberty Hose" handsomely worked in gilt letters on festoons of silk cloth looped from the ceiling. The members and their friends numbered about a hundred. The dancers took their places, the band struck up a lively waltz, and the forms of the ladies and their partners were soon whirling about the room.



Perhaps the most graceful dancers there were Ned Tibbits and Fanny Loper. Fanny was a tall, finely proportioned girl, and she carried herself well, now and then giving a slight toss to her queenly head, on the back of which her black hair was rolled up in luxuriant masses. Tibbits, exceedingly light of foot, and at the same time possessed of considerable strength, seemed well matched with such a partner. All were enjoying themselves, and Mrs. Schwartz, with her arms bared to the shoulder, was bustling about, bringing beer and other refreshments, when, as she entered the bar-room below, which she had left in charge of her husband during her temporary absence, she saw Baldy Bald come in with two other members of the Smashers. Tim Rann, or "Baldy," as he was most comonly termed, was a short, thick-set fellow, with huge breast and shoulders, a large bull neck, bloodshot eyes and coarse features. He wore a dirty red shirt, and a loose handkerchief was tied about his throat. His companions were hang-dog looking persons.

"What's you want?" somewhat sharply inquired Mrs. Schwartz.

"What's I want? Do yer call that grammar—sa-a-y?" cried Baldy.

"Never mind der grammar," answered Mrs. Schwartz. "You hafs noting to do mit der grammar."

"I ain't, eh?"

"Come, tell me what's you wants!" cried Mrs. Schwartz, more sharply than before.

"Well, let's see! What's yer got there?" inquired Baldy gruffly, as he glanced about him. "What'll yer take, boys?" he added, turning to his companions.

"Old port," grunted one of them.

"All right! Come, stir yerself, Mother Schwartz, and git the port."

Mrs. Schwartz turned to get the bottle, when Baldy, picking up a glass of beer, which the woman had brought back from upstairs and placed on the counter, drank the beverage almost at one gulp. Mrs. Schwartz, the moment she turned toward the men, noticed that the lager was missing.

"Who peen drinks dem peer?" she inquired fiercely.

Baldy quietly proceeded to help himself and his companions to the port.

"Of course we mean to pay you fur it, so don't yer go fur to gittin' scared."

"All right—if you pays for dem all."

Having drank, Baldy and his companions turned as if to go out. But Mrs. Schwartz called to them to come back and pay her.

"Yer can wait fur yer money, I guess," said Baldy.

"No, no! You would starfs a woman to def waitings for der money. I must haf dem money now!"

"You can't have it!"

"Planks down der needful—come!" said Mr. Schwartz, who stood behind the counter, both hands in his pockets, smoking a long pipe.

He moved to help his spouse, who now advanced, and seizing Baldy by the collar, commenced to shake him, shouting in a loud voice:

"Der money! der money! or, mein Gott, I shakes all der liquor out mit you!"

This was the moment for which Baldy had

waited. Drawing off with his fist, he struck the man in the face.

"Now, Smashers!" he shouted; "up and let 'em have it, my bullies!"

In an instant, from outside, where they had been waiting for this signal, all the other members of the company came pouring into the room. Some of them had huge stones, which they hurled at the bottles and glasses on the shelves behind the counter, while others shouted to the Liberties to come down and prevent the disturbance, if they were able. Mrs. Schwartz did her duty nobly. The moment Baldy struck her husband, she threw herself at his throat, which she caught with both hands, squeezing it with all her might. He was getting black in the face, when, by a furious kick, he succeeded in forcing her to let go her hold. Then she stepped back, caught up a heavy chair, and sent it flying at his head. Had it struck him he would have been knocked senseless. But he dodged it, and then bounded toward her.

Not a step did she budge, but as he came on she planted a tremendous left-hander between his eyes, almost stunning him. But now she was seized by several others, and although she still fought, striking and scratching, she was finally dragged into another room, and with strong ropes was tied to one of the legs of a heavy billiard table. Meanwhile Mr. Schwartz, whom the rowdies were beating over the head with bottles and broken chair legs, kept shouting for help. The Liberties were endeavoring to quiet the ladies, who were half crazy with terror.

"Oh, dear!" cried Fanny Loper to Tibbits. "What shall we do?"

"We will go and drive the rascals off! Your brother will probably be here soon with the police," said Ned.

He was moving off when Fanny caught him by the arm.

"No!" she cried, in a voice of mingled anxiety and tenderness, which went straight to the foreman's heart; "you must not go! I would not have you peril yourself. Better wait for the police."

"The loafers may kill Mr. and Mrs. Schwartz before that time," answered Tibbits.

Summoning his men, and requesting the ladies to remain in the room, he placed himself at the head of the members and rushed down into the bar-room. His party was joined by the male friends of the firemen, so that in all they numbered about fifty. The Smashers, who had been joined by all the roughs in the village, could count seventy in their party. The appearance of Ned Tibbits and his followers was greeted with a derisive shout, given in imitation of the crowing of a rooster. Ned, with some of the other members, first devoted his attention to the roughs who were beating Mr. Schwartz.

He picked up a couple of heavy stone jugs and hurled them at the heads of the men about the German. Two of them let go their hold and, spinning around, dropped senseless to the floor. Just then the click of a pistol was heard, and Tibbits saw Baldy pointing a revolver at his head. The next moment the sharp report of the pistol was heard, but missed its aim, for one of Ned's friends, who, with the others, had fought his way to the spot where the ruffian stood, dashed his arm downward, causing the bullet to go through



the floor. The fight was now becoming general and very desperate.

"Give it to them, Liberties! Let them have it!" cried Ned.

He sprang lightly over the counter, and was soon in the thick of the fight, showering telling blows right and left. With a cheer the Liberties followed their foreman. After some terrible fighting the roughs were driven from the bar-room. But they only went a short distance, where Baldy was about to rally them for another attack, when the steady, unmistakable tramp of the coming police was heard in an adjoining street. Ten minutes later not a rough was to be seen near the hotel. They had all separated, going in different directions. The police reached the hotel with Tom Loper.

"Too late!" said Ned, who, although bruised about the face and on other parts of his body, was as cheerful as a cricket.

None of the Liberties or their friends were sufficiently hurt to prevent their rejoining the ladies, although the marks left upon them did not improve their personal appearance. Again the band struck up, after the late combatants had rested, and again they were whirling about in the merry quadrille and waltz.

"I was so frightened," said Fanny to Tibbits. "I thought you would be killed."

They were at the time seated for a rest on one of the lounges. Ned laughed.

"We firemen are so used to things of the kind that we think nothing of them."

At that moment Mrs. Schwartz, who had been freed from the billiard table, came up to Tibbits.

"Noble mans!" she cried. "You haf got on der right side mit me forefer. Oh, you nople poy!"

And she patted him on the shoulder with her fat hand.

"Don't be jealous," said Ned to Fanny, when Mrs. Schwartz was out of hearing.

Fanny smiled, and then, in a slightly tremulous voice, she said:

"What right have I to be jealous?"

"I will soon give you the right," whispered Ned, "if you will let me."

"What do you mean, Mr. Tibbits?" said Fanny, blushing.

"Well," he answered, "there's no use of keeping back the truth from you. I made up my mind that I would never tell any woman I loved her until I was sure of a favorable answer. I don't know that you have ever given me much encouragement, Fanny, but when I now say I love you, as I do with my whole heart and soul, I hope your answer will be the kind I long for?"

"Answer to what?" said Fanny, looking up archly from the corners of her eyes.

"To the question whether my love is returned."

"I—I have always loved you," murmured Fanny.

"That's just the kind of answer I like," said Ned. "You have made a happy man of me!"

### CHAPTER III.—Playing the Hose.

At two o'clock in the morning the ball party at Schwartz's "broke up," and the firemen and their friends started for their homes. Ned Tibbits,

with Fanny on his arm, was slowly making his way toward the young girl's home. He was happy, as he had told his fair companion, and as Fanny was no coquette, she did not mind making him still happier by gently pressing, now and then, the arm of the gallant young fireman whom shortly before she had consented to accept for her husband.

"Fanny," said he, at length, "you're a woman after my own heart. There's no sawdust about you."

"Not a bit, Ned," answered the young girl. "I never like these 'butter-won't-melt-in-your-mouth' sort of women! I am not too shy to own any sentiment I feel. I love you, Ned, and that's the truth."

A noise something like the scraping of a spoon over a glass dish might have been heard at this juncture, followed by the exclamation in a feminine voice:

"Oh, Ned, don't!"

Then there was a sweet, merry laugh, for Fanny had enjoyed the rousing "smack" her lover had bestowed upon her pretty mouth. At the door of her residence, Ned again kissed her. Fanny then bade him good-night, and ran upstairs to her mother. At half-past six the young girl awoke from a refreshing sleep, hastily made her toilet, partook of a frugal breakfast, and was then off for the Plattsville cotton factory, in which she worked. There she toiled hard, her excellent health and constitution not suffering in the least from her having been up so late on the night before. It was her wages, joined to those of her brother, that enabled the little family to live neatly and comfortably, and her invalid mother to obtain many things which she required. It was Saturday, and all the members of Liberty Hose got away from their shops and offices earlier than they did on other days. At four o'clock, as Ned Tibbits, on his way to the engine-house, passed the cotton factory, he could not help looking up at a certain window, near which he knew Fanny was at her work. The young girl saw him and nodded to him, with a blush and a smile.

"Poor thing!" thought Ned, as he walked on, "how close and hot it must be for her up there! We Liberties are going to get up a chowder party in a few weeks, and Fanny shall go with me, as most all the rest of the boys are going to bring company along with them. She shall have one holiday this summer if I can bring it about."

Ned finally reached the engine-house, where a few of his company had already assembled.

"Three cheers, boys, for the smasher of smashers!" cried one. "Oh, didn't he 'sock' it to them last night!"

Three cheers and a tiger were given for Ned.

"Gentlemen," said the young foreman, "I propose three times three for the most distinguished of last night's warriors. You all know whom I have allusion to."

"Who's that?" inquired Tom Loper.

"Mrs. Schwartz," cried Ned.

Roars of laughter greeted the mention of the woman's name.

"Now, boys," said Ned, "let's take our machine to the pump and see how the new hose works to-day."

This proposal was greeted with applause. The engine was soon rattling down the street, with



the boys pulling some good pounds, as the Liberties always did when they "warmed" to their work. The pump was reached in a few minutes, and in a short time Ned had the hose playing. As there were but four men to work it, the stream it sent was at first only thirty feet high, but presently the four were joined by five more of the company, and Ned then had the satisfaction to see a spout a hundred feet high shoot up from the hose. His men, cheering, pumped away.

"O-ho! look at them beasts!" was uttered in a hoarse voice from the other side of the way. "Oh, you broken-backed bummers!"

Ned saw that the speaker was Jack Rann, who was peering from behind the coal-box of a grocery about thirty yards off. The young foreman paid no attention to him, but kept on playing the hose.

"Oh, look at the stroke of 'em!" continued Rann. "I could squirt a better stream than that 'ere with tobacco juice!"

He opened his mouth to illustrate, when bang! came a lump of dirt between his parted lips.

"Ow-wow-wow!" still howled Javk Rann, spitting the dirt out of his mouth. "Them Liberties throwed a stone at me!"

"Shut up! What's the matter with yer, yer big coward?" cried his brother Baldy, who at that moment appeared around a corner, with all the Bully Smashers at his back, and half a dozen roughs besides.

The gang soon reached a spot whence they could see the few Liberties still playing the hose. Baldy rolled up his shirt-sleeves, then clapping both hands to his sides, he made a derisive noise like the crowing of a rooster. Ned and his companions paid not the slightest attention to the noise.

"Boys," said Baldy, turning to his crowd, "I'll tell you what we'll do; why, we'll jist walk up to them quills and cut their old hose in two for 'em!"

At the head of his gang he advanced towards the Liberties, when Bill Walsh, who now held the hose, Ned having surrendered it to him, pointed it straight towards the gang.

"Pump away, boys!" cried the plucky little fellow. "Tell you what, they can put in any amount of liquor, those bummers, but we'll see how they'll stand water!"

"Good!" cried Ned. "Pump away, men! Give it to 'em, Bill, right and left. They can have all the water they want!"

Splash! gurgle! hiss! ker-whish! went the stream from the hose-pipe, drenching the Smashers from head to foot, and almost taking away their breath so that they were obliged to beat a retreat. They picked up stones, and were about advancing to throw them, when suddenly a noise was heard which sent a thrill to the hearts of all present. It was the clang of the town bell, followed by a far-away voice, faintly borne to their ears:

"Fire—fire—fire!"

#### CHAPTER IV.—At the Fire.

The clang of the bell, the distant voice, the pattering of approaching feet, and the other noises that are heard when the alarm strokes are first

sounded, are of course familiar to everyone. Not quicker does the lightning flash than did the stream of water vanish from the hose-pipe. The hose was rolled up in a twinkling on the engine, and while the Smashers were hurrying to procure theirs, Ned Tibbits was urging his company to pull their best. To reach the locality of the fire they would be obliged to pass their engine-house. There they paused an instant to hastily clap on their fire hats, and then Tibbits, springing out, roared through his trumpet in his deep, bass voice:

"Roll along, Liberties—roll along!"

The few men did their best. They had not made forty yards when they were joined by every member of the company. A more gallant-looking crowd could hardly be imagined. They were all young fellows full of health, life and good spirits. Most of them wore red shirts, and you ought to have seen what a show they made as they went rattling down the street. There was not a mealy-mouthed boy among them. They all knew just what they were about, and they meant to do it in the best way. You can bet your life on that.

"Ah, now, them's the fellers!" cried Jim Dale, a boy of fourteen, the hardest nut for his age in the town, as he saw the Smashers go dashing past, with Baldy roaring out to them like a bull.

But when he saw the Liberties come rattling along, you better believe the Smashers were nowhere. The Liberties took the shine out of 'em.

"There goes the daring boy—he's a darling boy, he is!" cried Jim Dale, as Ned Tibbits, tall and sinewy in his blue shirt, tightly-fitting black trousers and fire cap, with his lean, good-natured face and piercing dark eyes, went running past, his trumpet under his arm.

Ned had a peculiar way of his own of encouraging his boys when running to a fire. He never ranted or blustered to them through his trumpet. Although his voice was a clear, distinct bass, there was something indescribably pleasant about it. It came forth in short, quick, abrupt jerks that would have almost made you laugh, and hence its popularity. It was like the momentary blast of a trumpet.

"Roll her—roll her!" shouted Ned, through his trumpet.

The Liberties gained on the Smashers. Soon they passed them. There was great excitement in the town. Men and women were seen running in the direction of the fire. Ned saw the thick, black smoke rolling up above a cluster of houses ahead. A thrill went through him. He now knew it must be the cotton factory which was on fire. Fanny Loper worked there. Was she safe? For a moment the brain of the gallant young fireman seemed to spin around as he asked himself that question. But it was only for an instant. He saw a troop of frightened-looking girls—employees of the factory—not far off, and this put his mind at ease. If they had escaped, it was likely Fanny was out of danger, too.

"Hurry up," screamed a woman, who was watching the fire from a house-top. "It is the factory, and many of the girls in the upper story can't get out."

This terrible news dashed Ned's hopes to the ground. Fanny was one of those who worked in the upper story, and she was doubtless among the imperiled girls.



"Make her fly, boys," he shouted to his men. "Death is at work in the factory."

This seemed to put steam in the legs of the Liberties. Ten minutes later they were in front of the burning factory. Almost the whole of the lower story was in flames. At different windows of the upper story appeared the pale faces of about twenty frightened girls. Tibbits looked in vain for Fanny. She was not at any of the windows. The young foreman, although his heart misgave him, was cool and decided in every movement. There were ladders soon at hand, and placing one of these at an upper window, Tibbits mounted, shouting meanwhile through his trumpet to the Liberties, whom he had got to work with the hose on the lower story:

"Pump away, men, pump away!"

The girls almost pitched headforemost over each other in their haste to get on the ladder. A dense volume of smoke pouring through the open window over their heads and all around them betokened that the rapid fire had already reached the upper story.

"Keep cool, ladies! time enough, ladies!" said Tibbits, as he helped girl after girl to the ladder.

"No—no! we'll all be burned to death before we reach the ground!" cried the last one, pointing beneath her.

The flames from a window on the lower story were streaming out in close proximity to the ladder, threatening to burn it in two. Sixteen of the rescued girls had already reached the ground; the other four shrank up against the ladder, afraid to go further on account of the fire beneath. Little Bill Walsh was a plucky-boy. He and Tom Loper ran up the ladder at the call of the foreman, and got the girls down just in time to insure their safety. One girl's petticoat took fire, but Bill put it out with his hands, which were badly scorched. He did not mind it, however, for his skin was as tough as leather.

"Do you see anything of my sister, Ned?" called Loper, looking up through the rolling clouds of smoke.

But Ned was not in sight. He had heard his Fanny's scream, and had sprang into the upper room through the window.

"Where are you, Fanny? Keep up your spirits, Fanny. Here's your Ned, and he's the boy that's going to save you!"

Again that scream. At the same moment there was a crash outside, and Ned knew that the ladder he had climbed had burned through and fallen to the ground. The apartment in which he now was was so full of smoke that it was difficult to breathe.

"Where are you, Fanny?" he again called, moving in the direction of the scream he had heard. He saw an open door in a partition ahead of him. This partition was partly in flames, and the fire was circling about the doorway. He sprang to the opening. At first he could see nothing for the smoke, but an instant later he made out the form of Fanny Loper, shrinking against the wheel of a spinning machine. Directly in front of her, leaping up through the flooring, was a line of flame which had hindered her from joining the other girls in the next apartment. The fire had evidently originated in the room below this part of the factory, for the flames had already made fearful headway. Ned at once perceived that he

could not hope to reach Fanny alive through that vortex of fire. He ran to the window, and his face and his fire hat were indistinctly seen through the smoke by those below, as he shouted through his trumpet:

"Hose up here, and play away, Liberties!"

A ladder was soon up to the window, and game little Bill Walsh darted up, hose in hand, followed by Tom Loper. Some of the Smashers had placed another ladder against a window on the opposite side of the building, and Baldy himself now appeared, playing a stream into the apartment with his hose. As soon as he caught sight of Bill Walsh at the opposite window he uttered an oath, and directed the stream against the young fellow's face.

"Halloo, you bummer, that's your game, is it?" cried Bill, and it would have done you good to see the plucky little rooster stick to his post, and send so powerful a stream into the face of Baldy that the latter was obliged to crouch down to save himself from being suffocated. And that was the way things had always turned out so far. The Liberties seemed to get the best of the Smashers every time.

"This way!" cried Ned, from the room which was blazing—the one which, as it were, held Fanny in a fiery cage; "this way with that stream, and play for life!"

Bill sent the spout, hissing and sputtering, in the direction of the voice, although he could not see his foreman on account of the smoke.

"Shall I jump in with you, Ned?"

"No, stay where you are."

"Do you see my sister?" yelled Tom Loper over Bill's shoulder.

"Yes, play away there—play away, Liberties."

Ker-whish-sh-sh! swish—swish! went the water, while the fire sputtered and hissed as if in derision. Tom Loper was about leaping into the apartment through the open window, thinking he could help to save his sister, when the ladder, burned through below, slid to the ground on its lower end, and then went over sideways. Some of the people below endeavored to hold it, but in vain. Over it went, and in another second Tom and Bill must have been dashed with it to the ground had it not been caught by an iron brace projecting from the woodwork of the factory, between the upper and lower stories. The brace held the ladder, and although their insides fairly jumped at the shock, the young men contrived to hold on. There was a cheer from the crowd below at the way in which the plucky little Walsh had kept his hold. Not only had he used both hands, but his teeth had been fastened in one of the rounds, to which he had hung like a tiger-cat to a piece of meat. He was a perfect little gamecock, that Bill Walsh, and, excepting Ned, the Liberties hadn't a better member. The two young men descended to the ground. They endeavored to find another place for the ladder, but the flames were now rolling up in great broad sheets on both sides of the factory, so that they were obliged to give up the attempt.

"Boys," cried Bill Walsh, "what shall we do for Tibbits? Something's got to be done. We must not leave our game foreman to die up there in the fire!"

Meanwhile Tibbits, up amid flame and smoke, had, thanks to the stream which Walsh had sent



into the burning room while on the ladder, succeeded in reaching Fanny's side.

"Ned, dear Ned," she gasped, "it's lost—everything is lost!"

"No—no, not yet!" said Ned. "Don't lose your head, Fanny. Keep up your spirits. We're in a tight place, I know, but you can just make up your mind that I'm the boy to work a way through it."

"How can you?" said Fanny. "See, the fire is all around us!"

"I'll punch my way through somehow or other," said Ned.

As he spoke, he picked up a long iron crowbar and commenced to work at the wall, which was the end one of the building. A few feet behind him the fire, relieved from the extinguishing stream of water that had been played upon it, was making faster headway than ever. Through the floor, as already stated, it had forced its way, forming a yawning fire-pit or gulf only three yards from the lovers. Unless, therefore, Tibbits could manage to knock away some of the wall in front of him, and also some of the outside boarding of the building, the doom of his fair companion and himself was sealed. Poor Fanny watched him anxiously. She was half stifled by the smoke and the intense heat.

"This is what takes the sap out of a fellow, you can bet!" cried Ned, as he continued to ply the crowbar, with the perspiration running down his face in streams.

"Take a rest," said Fanny, pitying, even at that dreadful moment, her perspiring lover. "You will kill yourself before you accomplish your purpose."

"No, I won't," answered Ned. "This crowbar has got to do its work, sure pop!"

He banged away with the instrument, and at last, to his intense delight, it went through the outside sheathing of a building, making an aperture in which the foreman could now easily work the crowbar.

"How good that feels!" cried Fanny.

In fact, the fresh air blowing through the aperture her lover had made afforded great relief to the half-smothered girl. The foreman, still plying the crowbar, soon had made an aperture large enough for the young girl to crawl through. He thrust his head through it, for the fire had not yet reached the end of the building, and applied his trumpet to his mouth.

"Where are you, Liberties? Ladder and hose this way!" rang his deep voice above the noise of the roaring flames and the shouting of voices below. Bill Walsh heard that voice, and he pricked up his ears like a little war-horse. In a moment he and Tom Loper had shouldered a ladder, and this was soon placed so that the upper end nearly reached the aperture which Tibbits had made in the building.

"Now, my dear!" cried Ned, holding out his arms, "let me help you through the opening."

She held up her arms for him to take her, and he helped her, feet foremost, through the opening, so that she succeeded in getting on the ladder. One of the Liberties was below with the hose ready, but he had to wait before he could mount and use it until Fanny could get down. She was none of your slow girls. She had good active limbs of her own, and the way she went down that ladder made even the Smashers cheer.

Meanwhile Ned had resumed his work with the crowbar, so as to make the opening large enough to permit the passage of his broad shoulders. All at once his arm was seized; a strong hand also caught him by the back of his coat collar and pulled him away from the opening.

He turned quickly to see Baldy, who, scorched and blackened by fire and smoke, presented a truly hideous appearance. The ladder on which the Smashers foreman had stood had burned through below, and he had been obliged to get into the building through the window. After vainly searching for some place of exit, he had entered the room occupied by Tibbits, and leaping across the fire-chasm, he had fallen, half-senseless, on the other side. But he was a strong man, possessed of much vitality, and he quickly recovered himself to rush at Ned, as shown, and pull him from the opening.

"See here now!" he cried, 'yer needn't think you're goin' to escape in that way! I've a grudge agin you, I have, and you won't leave this place alive if I can help it! You can just make up yer mind to that!"

"Fool!" cried Ned. "This is no time to kick up a muss, anyhow!"

As he spoke he drove his fist into Baldy's face with a force that knocked him back, causing him to release his hold.

## CHAPTER V.—Ned's Peril.

Baldy was knocked so far back that he must have fallen into the fire-pit but for his antagonist, who, springing forward, caught him by the cuff of his coat in time to save him from so dreadful a fate.

"I'm not the boy to see a man—even my worst enemy—go down into such a fire-hole!" cried Tibbits.

Baldy, gasping for breath, permitted Ned to draw him a little way from the burning chasm.

"You saved me," he growled, "but I ain't going to spare yer for all that. Ever since the day that Fanny gave me the sack for such a long-legged moke as you are, I jist made up my mind that I'd have yer life if I could git it. The time's come now, and yer may as well know. Yer'll never leave this place alive, and that's all there is about it."

"Don't get in a sweat about it, Baldy," he said. "I'll live my time out, I dare say, in spite of you or any other man."

But Baldy now caught the speaker by the throat, and pulled him, with an irresistible jerk, towards the fire chasm.

"Down into that fire-hole you go!" he roared. "Yer time is up, and I'm goin' ter send yer down!"

Tibbits grappled with his foe, and a desperate struggle took place on the edge of that blazing pit. Perhaps Baldy was the stronger of the two, but it is certain that Tibbits was the most active. Now, boys, I'll tell you about a trick he had, whenever thus engaged in a "rough-and-tumble." It was a trick of his own, and there were few men that could stand it without caving in. In the first place he allowed time enough to pass for his antagonist to get pretty well blown with his exertions. Then he suddenly caught him by the hair, pulled his head back, and rapidly punched him



under the chin. Vainly Baldy endeavored to recover himself from the effect of those terrific blows.

Half choked with the fire and smoke which poured up from the chasm, while the fist of his opponent made his brain fairly spin around, he was about to cry out: "Enough!" when the floor beneath Ned's feet cracked and sank, compelling the young foreman to make an effort to gain a firmer footing. Baldy's eyes glowed with exultation—like those of a savage beast, and with one tremendous exertion of strength, he swung Tibbits toward the fire chasm. But Ned was game to the last. Although it seemed as if nothing could now save him from pitching headforemost into the flaming cavern, he kept his hold of Baldy, determined, if he went, to drag him with him. To save himself from going, the Smasher straddled both legs, and thus, without intending it, he enabled Ned to regain his balance, which he had no sooner done than he continued his favorite trick.

"Enough—enough!" gasped Baldy, as he sat down on the floor.

"Ye've got the better of me this time, but I'll fix yer yet. I've sworn to take your life, and I'll keep my word, unless yer make tracks from this 'ere town of Plattsville, for there ain't room here for both of us nohow!"

Ned picked up the crowbar and continued his work at the outside planking of the building. Bill Walsh had ere this arrived at the opening, hose in hand, and began to play a stream into the room, but he had not been able to see the occupants on account of the smoke. In fact, the smoke would have smothered both Tibbits and Baldy, but for the open windows of the other apartment, through which some of it found egress, and through which the wind was blowing. Ned soon had made an opening large enough to pass through. Bill Walsh, who had pointed his hose somewhat to the left of the position occupied by his friend, now saw him plainly.

"Give me the hose!" cried Ned.

It was passed to him, and he commenced to play it all about the burning room. The fire had crept up at the sides and loosened the ends of the beams that supported the roof. Creak—creak! ker-ack—ker-ack! warningly sounded the roof.

"Better get out of that as quick as you can, Ned," said Walsh.

Baldy now crawled through the opening, and got on the ladder, which he began to descend.

"Come, Ned, come!" continued Walsh.

All at once the roof began to sway.

"For your life, Ned, quick!" shouted Walsh.

"Oh, Ned, do come down!" called Fanny, at the foot of the ladder.

"Coming," answered Ned.

But he could not resist the temptation to play another stream into the fire-chasm—just one more before he left. As he did so a portion of the roof sank with a loud crack, and a moment later, with a terrific crash, the whole weighty mass came tumbling into the room below. Ned had sprung to the opening when he saw the roof coming down, but he would have been buried in the ruin had it not been for Bill Walsh, who, catching him by the collar of his coat, pulled him with a powerful jerk through the aperture, headforemost, upon the ladder.

Ned saved himself from tumbling by seizing one of the rounds with his hands, while Walsh held him by his long legs above. The people below could not help laughing at the figure cut by Ned while in this position, but he soon regained his proper posture, and then there was a rousing cheer, as, with a graceful wave of the hand, he bowed to the multitude. The factory was now one mass of fire. Both the Liberties and the Smashers did their best, but the building was burned nearly to the ground. As no more could be done the firemen started for their respective engine-houses, put their engines in place and returned to their homes. Ned's rescue of the factory girls became afterwards the talk of the town, and Baldy was almost beside himself with envy. He did his best to disparage his rival, but when he found that he was unsuccessful, he gave up the attempt.

The next week was the target excursion of Liberty Hose. They marched to a patch of woods a short distance from town where they were to shoot for prizes. It happened that Ned's grandfather lived on the other side of the woods, and when the shooting was about over Ned walked through the woods to visit his grandfather. Going along leisurely, Ned was just passing a large tree when a man with a mask over his face sprang out in front of him and immediately grappled with the boy fireman.

Ned, taken at a disadvantage, nevertheless put up a good fight. But his antagonist was the stronger of the two and as they struggled they came near to a pool of water. The masked man now had Ned down and was on top of him. He seized Ned's hair and pulled his head under the water. Ned was fast drowning, and becoming weaker.

Ned not coming back in reasonable time, the boys of Liberty Hose became anxious and several started to look for him, but he could not be found. They waited until it was time for them to march back to town, imagining that perhaps he had preceded them. But nothing had been seen or heard of Ned. A searching party started out that night, and Fanny Loper, who had heard of Ned's disappearance, went with them. After a long search by lantern light, they came to the pool of water and saw the evidence of the struggle that had taken place there. They came to a trail leading from there and came to an old well. It was possible Ned had fallen into it and was now at the bottom.

Tom Loper signified his intention of descending, and started down; when he had gone a ways there was a crash, and Fanny heard him utter a cry, followed by a splash. She called his name, but there was no answer.

Walsh now threw off his coat and descended the well for quite a distance. He asked for a pole or something to reach the bottom with, and a long tree limb was brought with which he felt around the bottom, but could feel nothing like any bodies at the bottom of the well. Shortly he ascended to the top.

When he said he could feel nothing of the boys' bodies, Fanny broke down completely—both lover and brother lost. Soon the searchers gave up and returned slowly to their homes.



## CHAPTER VI.—The Secret Rendezvous.

As said in a previous chapter, the struggles of Ned Tibbits, while his head was held under the water of the stream by his assailant, soon became very feeble. The brave young fireman had done his best to free himself from his opponent's grasp. Accident, however, had given the other the advantage of position, of which he seemed determined to avail himself. Ned felt that he was strangling. The water rushed into his mouth and nostrils, a dark mist seemed to gather before his vision, and he finally became unconscious. At that moment the man who held him was seized by strong hands, and pulled away from his intended victim, who was then raised from the water.

The form of the foreman was placed upon the ground, where it lay limp and motionless.

"Baldy, my boy, yer've got yerself into trouble!" continued the speaker—a young rough, with lowering brow and a hardened expression of countenance. "Come; yer may as well take that piece of black crepe off yer face, for I and all the rest of us knowed yer from the first!"

"How did you know it was me?" Baldy inquired fiercely, now facing the person who had addressed him, and removing his piece of crepe.

The other laughed hoarsely.

"What d'yer take me for?" he said. "I'd know yer in the biggest crowd that ever was!"

Baldy now looked at the pale face and still form of Tibbits on the ground. The eyes of all the roughs, who numbered about twenty of the worst characters in Plattsville, were turned toward him. He became ghastly, a tremor shook his frame, and drops of perspiration came out on his brow.

"Do yer think he's dead? Come, now, I'd like for to know, as I didn't want to kill him. I on'y wanted to scare him a bit."

To tell the truth, he was much frightened at having been discovered in the perpetration of so foul a crime.

"What made yer do it, Baldy? I didn't think you was such a fool," said Waxey.

"Didn't I tell yer it was an accident?" replied Baldy.

"I tell yer what we'd better do," continued Waxey. "I believe there's money for us in this thing!"

He went about among his companions, whispering something to them. Whatever it was, it received the approval of all, even of Baldy. A few minutes later the senseless form was lifted by a few of the men and borne along through the woods, Baldy and some of the others acting as scouts, to watch that no stranger or other unwelcome person should discover the party. Swiftly through the woods they passed, and at last they reached the ruins of the stone house near the well. Waxey then motioned to some of the gang, who at once went to work, removing large stones from what seemed to have been once the area of a house, with its brick steps leading into the cellar. A sufficient number of stones having been removed, an opening was revealed at the foot of the steps. It was just large enough for a man to pass through. It led into a brick passage,

which sloped downward into a vault under what had once been the cellar.

For what purpose, or when and by whom this vault had been constructed, the Smashers' friends could not tell. Waxey had discovered it by chance, one day, when he was out gunning in the woods. A rabbit which he had shot and wounded took refuge among the stones in the area, and in pulling them away the young man saw the opening at the foot of the steps. Passing through it he soon came upon the vault, which was about twelve by fifteen feet in size, and walled with cemented stone. He lost no time in making his discovery known to his friends—other roughs, who were some of the hardest boys in the town, and they resolved to use the vault for a secret retreat—a sort of rendezvous to which they could repair at any time. The apartment contained a few chairs, a pine table, and an old rusty lounge. Upon the latter Tibbits' bearers laid the senseless form of the young foreman. Meanwhile, a few of the gang piled up against the opening the stones they had removed, so as to conceal the entrance to the retreat. Waxey now took matches from his pocket, went to a corner of the ranch, and the next moment the apartment was lighted by a candle in a black bottle. Just then Tibbits was seen to slowly open his eyes, while a faint color tinged his cheeks.

"He is coming to!" cried Baldy.

All the roughs approached Ned, who, a moment later, had raised himself on his elbow, and was gazing about him in a bewildered manner.

"Where am I?" were his first words.

"Don't you wish we'd tell yer—eh?" cried Waxey, leering into his face.

Tibbits bowed his head upon his hands, and struggled with his confused brain. Gradually past events forced themselves upon his mind. He remembered his struggle by the stream, with his head under the water. He looked at Baldy.

"You were the man who tried to smother me by holding my head beneath the surface of the stream."

"No," broke in Waxey, "Baldy didn't do it! Some feller—we don't know who he was, as he ran away when he saw us coming—had your head down under the water. You were senseless when we pulled you out, and so we thought it best to bring yer here."

"Why did you bring me here?" he said. "Why didn't you take me to my friends? They were not far off."

As he spoke he staggered to his feet.

"I will leave this place and go to them now," he continued, moving toward a door which opened upon the passageway leading to the outside entrance.

"No, yer don't," said Waxey, placing himself before him. "Do yer think we're goin' to let yer leave us in that way, after the trouble we've had in bringing you here?"

"What are you going to do with me?" Ned inquired. "Remember there is such a thing as law, even in the out-of-the-way places of Plattsville."

"We ain't a-goin' to hurt ye," said Waxey. "At the same time, you ain't a-goin' ter leave this place in a hurry; so ye may as well sit down again!"

The foreman was still faint and dizzy from the late ordeal through which he had just passed. As



he seated himself on the lounge, a feeling of drowsiness stole over him, and, in spite of his efforts to the contrary, he soon fell into a deep sleep. Hours passed, and still he slept. Meanwhile, the roughs had been holding a consultation.

"Hark!" he said. "D'ye hear nothin'?"

"I thought I heard a woman's voice," answered Baldy.

"It comes from the top of the well," said Waxey. "Come, boys, let's see what's up!"

As he spoke, he darted through an opening at one side of the vault, and on his hands and knees, followed by several of his gang, he crept along a narrow passage. This passage led to the left side of the well, about twelve feet below the top. There the pieces of rock with which the well was stoned were loosened. In fact, they partially hid an opening there large enough to admit a human body. As Waxey removed, by pulling them inward, the stones which loosely filled the aperture, a gleam of light flashed into his eyes. It came from the lantern fastened to Tom's belt, while, as previously stated, he was descending into the well.

"Who is it?" whispered one of Waxey's companions.

"It's Tom Loper—one of them Liberties," answered Waxey. "I got a glimpse of him when I looked up from the hole. He and his sister—for she is agove there—I jist heard her speak—seem to think that Ned's body is at the bottom of the well, and he's goin' to look for it."

"Better stop up the hole, or he'll discover our hiding-place," said the other.

"That's jist what I'm goin' to do!"

But, even as he spoke, Loper descended so quickly that he arrived opposite to the hole, and, to his surprise, beheld the crouching figure of Waxey within the aperture. Before he could cry out Waxey, promptly picking up a stone, hurled it at the lantern, which it struck, smashing and extinguishing it in a moment. Then the rough, seizing Loper by the collar, jerked him into the passage.

Several of the gang dragged Loper forward toward the vault, while another placed his hand over his mouth to stifle his cries. As soon as Waxey had stopped up the aperture in the side of the well with the stone he had displaced, he made his way to the vault. Loper, now on his feet, was surrounded by the gang. All at once, as one of them stood aside, he beheld his foreman quietly asleep on the lounge.

"Ned Tibbits!" he cried, joyfully. "Alive, thank God! Where did you find him? How came he here?" added Loper, turning toward his captors.

"I dare say you'd like for to know," sneered Baldy. "We've got you both in a trap from which we won't let you go in a hurry!"

"It'll be the worst for you if you don't," said Loper. "If I had three of our Liberties here I'd fight my way out of here in spite of you all!"

"Stop yer blowing," said Baldy. "You Liberties are all gas, anyhow! You're a pack of cowards!"

"You lie!" cried Loper, unable to control his indignation, "and the thrashing you and your men got the other day proves it!"

At this Baldy hauled off and struck Loper upon the jaw. The young man returned the blow. Then he and Baldy closed in a rough-and-tumble fight. As previously stated, the foreman of the

Smashers was very strong. He contrived to throw Loper and to fall on top of him. But Tom, as limber as an eel, wriggled and struggled, so that he would soon have got uppermost, had it not been for one of the roughs, who pulled him back. This enabled Baldy to get both knees upon Loper's breast, and to twist a hand in his hair, by which latter he held his head down on the floor of the vault, while he proceeded to pummel him unmercifully with his fist. His blows were like those of a sledge-hammer. With ugly thuds they struck the prostrate young man, from whose mouth and nostrils the blood began to flow.

Loper struggled in vain to release himself. His face would have been beaten to a jelly had it not been for a sudden interruption.

## CHAPTER VII.—The Fight.

The interruption was caused by Tibbits. Awakened by the half-suppressed cries of the spectators of the combat, the young foreman arose to a sitting posture, and rubbed his eyes. His gaze then fell upon Tom Loper prostrate on the floor, with Baldy inflicting upon him those sledge-hammer blows with his fist. In an instant Ned, angry and surprised, was on his feet. He rushed up to Baldy and pushed him off his friend.

"Let him up!" he said, sternly.

One of the gang now endeavored to seize Tibbits, but the latter at once knocked him down. Meanwhile, Baldy had sprung to his feet and confronted him.

"A pretty crowd you are!" cried Ned. "I suppose Loper and I'll have the whole pack of you on us now, you wretched sneaks!"

His wrathful gaze was fixed on Baldy, who drew back a few steps, as if to be on his guard. Tom Loper, his face covered with blood, had arisen and taken his place at Ned's side.

"Ned," said he, "I'm with you, whatever you are going to do."

"Of course, we can't do anything against such a crowd," said Tibbits.

Waxey viciously rolled in his cheek the cud of tobacco he was chewing.

"Who do yer think is afraid of yer—s-a-a-y?" cried Waxey, advancing close to the young foreman with doubled fists. "Any one of this gang could whip two such bummers as you and Loper."

"Better try it and see," said Ned.

"I could do it in quick time if I wanted to," growled Waxey.

"I don't believe it," said Ned.

"You don't, eh? Come, now, I'll make an agreement with yer. I'll fight yer square and fair, and if I don't whip yer, you can have yer freedom from this 'ere place."

"Provided Tom Loper whips me, too," put in Baldy. "He and I ain't through yet, by a long shot!"

"Yes," said Waxey, "provided I don't whip Tibbits and you don't whip Loper, they are both free from this 'ere place."

"It must be fair and square," said Tibbits. "There must be no interference."

"Do yer hear that, boys?" cried Waxey, turning to his crowd. "None of yer must interfere."

Waxey threw off his coat, buckled a belt he



wore more tightly about his waist, and rolled up his shirt sleeves above the elbow, displaying a pair of arms like those of a blacksmith. This person, whom all the roughs in the village recognized as their leader, or captain, had been a professional pugilist. He bore upon his visage the marks of injuries he had received in many a desperate fist fight. Upon his forehead and upon both of his cheek-bones there were livid scars which time would never heal.

"Let Loper and I have the first mill," said Baldy. "We won't be long. I'll soon settle him."

"All right," said Waxey, sitting down on the lounge.

As Baldy and Loper met, the former struck out a powerful blow. But his opponent parried it, and at the same time dealt him a peeler between the eyes. Baldy staggered like a bull, and, rushing in, endeavored to close with his opponent. But Loper's previous experience made him wary, and he resolved, if possible, to keep his antagonist at arms'-length. He was an active young fellow, and he danced about his enraged opponent, putting in his blows with great rapidity and effect. Baldy soon found himself nearly blinded, and being now unable to see his antagonist, he cried out:

"Enough!"

"Well," said Waxey, "it was a square fight, and I ain't got nothin' to say. As Baldy's been whipped—he's been whipped, that's all. Come, Tibbits, if you're ready."

"All ready!" promptly answered Tibbits, and he put himself in position as he spoke.

"Look out! I'm goin' fur yer!" cried Waxey, as he made a feint.

Tibbits never budged. Waxey whirled around on his heel as he again came into position.

"Now, then, look out fur yer pepper-box—won't yer—s-a-a-y!" cried Waxey, as he aimed a straight, quick blow at Ned's mouth.

Down went Ned's head, under the other's arm, and up went his right fist against his chin, knocking his teeth together with a click. Waxey parried a second blow, and then drove in a right-hander for Ned's left eye. Tibbits parried this blow with one arm, his other went straight out, and Waxey now caught it on the nose. By this time he had ceased to smile. Respect for his antagonist made him more sober and wary. A few more blows were given and returned, when, feeling confident of his strength, Waxey closed in for a rough-and-tumble. Blow after blow was given and received, but the hard skin of Waxey did not show punishment so much as that of Tibbits.

In an instant the young foreman saw a chance for a favorite blow. Hauling off, he sent in his left heavily between the eyes of his opponent, who was, for a moment, staggered by so heavy and unexpected a blow. Tibbits was not the boy to miss following up an advantage under such circumstances. His blows were rained in so rapidly that Waxey suffered terrible punishment ere he could recover from the sort of "daze" into which he had been thrown. At last Tibbits saw an opportunity for his favorite chin-music trick. He sprang upon Waxey, pulled back his head, and his fist crashed up against the man's chin. Gasping for breath, Waxey held up a hand as a sign that he was vanquished, while a half audible "enough!" came from between his swollen lips. Then the young foreman, who, to tell the truth,

was so exhausted that he could not have fought a minute later, sat down on the lounge. Loper came up and shook hands with him.

"My fight was a hard one, Ned," he said, "but yours was still harder. We have earned our liberty, I suppose?"

Tibbits arose from the lounge.

"Well," he said to Waxey, "I believe we are free to go now. Will you tell your men to show us the way out?"

"No, sir; yer don't leave this place in a hurry," answered Waxey.

"Pshaw!" cried Ned, scornfully, "I might have known how things would turn out."

He and Tom Loper sat down on the lounge.

"Got a cigar?" inquired the foreman of his friend.

"No, but I have a pipe, and I have some tobacco."

He took the pipe from his pocket, filled it, and presented it to Ned. The young man lighted it, and sat puffing as unconcerned as if he were in his own engine-house. That was Tibbits' way. Whenever he got into any trouble from which he could not extricate himself he was cool and composed—never in a flurry. But, oh, wasn't it a cut to the roughs to see Waxey—the man upon whom they had placed so much dependence—so badly beaten by the Liberties' plucky foreman.

## CHAPTER VIII.—Disguised.

A week passed, during which the Liberties, who were looking for Ned, could find no sign of him, either dead or alive. The well had been dragged, but it was ascertained that there was nobody there. Fanny Loper was still suffering deep anguish on account of her missing lover and her brother. Bill Walsh called occasionally to report the fruitless result of every search that was made.

"What can have become of him?" Fanny would say, clasping her hands.

"Don't know," Bill would answer, "but we boys have all sworn not to rest until we come upon some clue."

Occasionally they met in the engine-house, but the absence of the light and soul of the company, Ned Tibbits, had cast a gloomy look on the faces of all the men. One evening, as they sat thus, conversing in low voices, they were surprised by the entrance of a strange-looking person. He was an old man, apparently about seventy, wearing a snuff-colored coat and a high hat battered out of all shape, from under which his white hair fell in dishevelled masses. He walked with trembling steps, and supported himself a little with a thick cane. None of the company had ever before seen this old man.

"Take a seat and rest yourself, sir," said Bill, bringing him a chair.

He sat down.

"This is Mr. Tibbits' company, is it not?" he inquired.

"Yes, sir," answered Bill, looking keenly at the stranger.

The eyes of all of the company present were turned eagerly upon the old man.

"And my name is Jenkins," he said.

"Well, go on, Mr. Jenkins," said Bill. "If you



have any news of our Ned, just let us hear it, for we are the boys to be glad of it, I can tell you."

"You would like to know what has become of Mr. Tibbits?" said the old man.

"Just so—that we would, you can believe," said Bill.

"How much will you give me to bring him to you, safe and sound?"

"You mean to say that Ned Tibbits is safe and well?" cried Walsh.

"He is well, but not safe. He is in the hands of people who mean to kill him before to-morrow morning."

"Do you mean that?" cried Bill, much alarmed.

"Yes. He will certainly die before to-morrow morning, unless you give me a chance to effect his release."

Bill looked around at his companions. Then he again sharply scrutinized the speaker.

"Come, now," he said, "there is no 'gammon' about what you tell us—eh?"

"It is true," said the old man.

"Then why can you not let us know at once where he is, that we may go there and rescue him?"

"I cannot do that," was the reply.

"Why not?"

"They would kill me if I did."

"But you say that if we give you money enough you will bring him to us."

"Yes, I will send him to you."

"Would not you be killed for doing that?"

"No; for I would give all the money, except a slight reservation, to the people who have him in their hands. Give me one thousand dollars, and your foreman shall be sent to you safe and sound. He will tell his story when he reaches you."

Now, it struck Bill, as well as the rest of the boys, that this was a "sort of game." He suddenly laid his hand on the old man's shoulder.

"Come, now, I'll bet you are one of the very people you speak of as having Tibbits in their power," he cried.

"You are mistaken," was the reply. "I am a hermit. I live in a cave about fifteen miles from here, to which I have lately moved. The people of whom I speak came to me yesterday, and told me that they wanted me to do an errand for them. I could perceive that they were bad characters, and that they would give me no peace unless I complied with their wishes. They sent me on the errand I have just explained to you."

"You should have gone to the police about it."

"I was afraid of my life. They would have found it out, and have killed me."

"We don't want to call you hard names," said Bill, "but how do we know that what you, a stranger, tell us is true?"

"I have a guarantee here," said the old man, pulling a piece of paper from his pocket.

Bill took the paper and read upon it these lines:

"What the bearer says is true. I am in the hands of people who threaten to take my life before to-morrow morning, unless one thousand dollars be paid for my release. The Liberties will please pay the money, and I will refund it after I rejoin them.  
Ned Tibbits."

Bill Walsh closely scrutinized the writing. Then he passed the paper around among the company.

"That's more'n we can afford," said Bill, coolly.

"More than you can afford to save the precious life of your foreman?" cried the old man, in surprise.

"Yes," said Bill, unmoved.

Jenkins arose.

"Then I will tell the people who sent me on this errand what you say."

Bill Walsh nodded.

"Good-night," said Jenkins.

"Good-night," returned all the company in chorus.

They could see at once that Bill was up to something, but what it was they couldn't tell.

"Now, boys," said Walsh, as soon as the old man was gone, "there's something for us to do to-night. We must follow that fellow without his knowing it. He is not what he seems to be. You may make up your minds that he is trying to play us a trick."

"Yes, I believe we all think so," said one of the others. "It will not be hard to follow an old fellow like that."

"Harder than you think," answered Bill. "He is not quite so old as he looks. Did you notice his teeth?"

"No."

"Well, they were as even and sound as mine. Then, again, his cheeks were a little too smooth and plump for a person of his age."

"Ho—ho! that looks suspicious."

"It is so suspicious," answered Walsh, "that I wouldn't be afraid to bet that the fellow isn't any older than I am."

"You think he is disguised like an old man?"

"I do; but come, boys, we must lose no time. I will follow him, and the rest of you keep me in sight."

Bill then left the engine-house, moving along in the shadow of a high fence, towards the retreating form of Jenkins, which he could make out in the distance. The moon was obscured by clouds on this night, so that he had but little light to assist him. All at once the old man disappeared behind a hedge. Bill kept on, but he could see nothing of the person he was looking for. All at once, however, he fancied he saw a figure seated on a stone wall directly ahead of him. As he approached it, there was light enough for him to perceive that this was not an old man. He was a young fellow whom Walsh recognized, in spite of the obscurity, as Andy Jackman, one of the worst roughs of the town.

"Hallo, Bill! Where yer bound?" he inquired.

"Nowhere—at least, nowhere in particular; I am going home," answered Bill.

"Oh!" said Andy.

Bill kept on, moving briskly along until he had passed a hedge, when he struck into a path which would lead him around to the spot where Andy was seated. That Andy and the old man who had come to the engine-house were one and the same person he did not doubt. In this surmise he was correct. The moment Bill was out of sight, Andy jumped down from the stone wall, and picking up a bundle—the disguise he had worn—he hurried along a path leading to the woods. Reaching there, he plunged into its depths and kept on, now and then looking behind him, as if to make sure that he was not watched. At last he reached the area near the ruins containing the stones, which



he proceeded to displace. Thus gaining entrance to the narrow passage leading into the vault, he replaced some of the stones, after which he passed on. He entered the vault, where were assembled all of the gang, who made it their rendezvous. On the old lounge, tied hand and foot, were Ned Tibbits and Tom Loper. Both looked thinner than when they were first brought there. The deprivation of fresh air and a proper quantity of food—for they were here allowed nothing but bread and water—had not failed to have some effect upon them. Tibbits' constitution was one of iron, but even he would have now owned that he had lost some strength.

"Well?" said Waxey, as Andy entered, "how did yer make out?"

"Not very well. The mokes wouldn't plank down the rhino even for Tibbits."

"Oh, what a set!" cried Waxey. "Wouldn't give it even to save their foreman's life."

"No. The fact is, though, I think they may have suspected there was humbug in the matter. You have well imitated Tibbits' writing in the note you sent, but I don't think they believed it was genuine."

"You didn't let any of 'em foller yer, I hope?" said Waxey.

"No."

And he described how Bill Walsh had passed him as he sat on the stone wall.

"Well done," said Waxey.

Then he drew Baldy, the Smashers' foreman, who was present, to one side.

"You say you are sure you can git the 'soap'?" he said to this man.

"I am sure of it," answered Baldy. "I will pay it to you after you have done the deed, and we can clear out, and never trouble Plattsville again."

"That's so. Well, six hundred dollars is better than five. A larger reward than five hundred might be offered in time, but we can't keep them prisoners too long, as the police, the moment the affair is put in their hands, may scent out our rendezvous and come here. It would go hard with us if they should."

"Better do it at once," said Baldy, "and get through with it as soon as you can."

"I wish the Liberties had forked down the thousand. I would have liked that better," said Waxey.

"As they didn't fork it down," said Baldy, "you cannot do better than to close with my offer of six hundred."

"I'll do it, as I said," replied Waxey, "but if you are not up to yer word—look out for yerself," he added, in a terrible voice.

"You needn't be afraid. I shall keep my word, if only for once in my life."

"Where did you say the money is?" inquired Waxey.

"At my lodgings. I sold the lots for my uncle day before yesterday, for six hundred. He is waiting in New York City for me to send him the money, but he'll have to wait a long time."

"Enough!" said Waxey. "Only mind yer don't try in any way to do me out of the money."

"Never fear."

Waxey then advanced toward the Liberties' foreman.

"Ned Tibbits, yer time has come!" he cried. "Have you anything to say before you kick?"

"Nothing, except that you are a confounded rascal—worse than I thought. I didn't know you were bad enough to take a man's life in cold blood."

"Gimme seven hundred dollars, and I'll let yer out of limbo sound and safe," answered Waxey.

"I have not the money," answered Tibbits.

"Well, it seems yer company don't think enough on yer to advance it, either. Come, time's up!"

## CHAPTER IX.—Unexpected.

As he spoke, Waxey motioned to some of the gang, who at once seizing Ned by the coat-collar, dragged him through the opening at one side of the vault into the narrow passage leading into the well. Others of the gang followed with Loper. Having both arms and legs tied with strong cords, neither of the young men could offer any resistance. They were drawn along towards the opening in the side of the well. This aperture was at present well concealed by large pieces of rock, so that no person descending into the well could have detected it. Waxey now proceeded to pull away the fragments of rock. This done, he again motioned to Jim Dunham, one of the men. The fellow was a dark, sullen-looking man, with an evil expression of the eyes. He went into the vault, whence, soon after, he returned, carrying a large blacksmith's hammer.

"Which one shall I tackle first?" he inquired, looking from Tibbits to Loper.

"That one," answered Waxey, pointing to Loper. "Strike hard when you strike!"

"All right," answered Jim, as he raised the hammer above Loper's head.

For a moment he held is thus poised; then he brought it down with tremendous force. Loper, however, succeeded in dodging it. The hammer struck the paved ground with a ringing noise, and not having previously been very tight on the handle, it now flew off, and, passing through the aperture, fell into the well. Waxey gave utterance to an oath of impatience. Jim picked up the handle of the hammer, and with it struck Loper on the head, a blow which knocked him senseless.

"There," said the brute; "don't know as he's dead, but soon will be, after we roll him into the well."

Loper was dragged to the aperture and was quickly shoved through. Ned Tibbits shuddered as he heard the body, with a dull splash, strike the water far below.

"Him next!" said Waxey, pointing toward Tibbits.

Jim Dunham advanced with the handle of the hammer, which, being heavy, well served the purposes of a club.

"Strike hard when you do strike!" said Baldy.

Jim raised the handle, and brought it down with great force, but dodging it as well as he could in the narrow space where he was, Tibbits received it a little slantingly on the side of the skull. The blow stunned him for an instant. As he partially recovered his senses, he felt himself being dragged toward the aperture, overlooking the dark depths of the well. Now was it fancy, or did he really hear the sound of voices near the well? He



resolved to do his best to gain time. He contrived, as he was being dragged along, to get the rope that held his wrists over one of the fragments of rock, by which his course was thus impeded.

"Curse it!" cried Baldy. "The rope has caught against one of those stones."

As Dunham stooped to remove it, Ned, pretending to be still unconscious, dropped flat upon it and hugged the rock with his arms, without seeming purposely to do so.

"Hark! what is that?" cried Waxey, suddenly, while Durham was still trying to pull Ned away from the piece of rock. The sound of voices now was distinctly audible. It came from the area, from which the noise of the stones being removed from the entrance could also be heard.

"To the door and bolt it!" cried Waxey. "I think it is the police who are coming."

"No," said Baldy, "the police wouldn't make so much noise."

Two of the men ran to the vault, and quickly fastened with locks and bolts a wooden door that opened upon the passage leading to the entrance. Meanwhile Dunham, exerting himself with all his strength, and assisted by one of the others, succeeded in getting Tibbits' arms away from the fragment of rock. The young foreman, as he was being pushed head-foremost through the aperture, gave himself up for lost. Further and further he was pushed through the aperture, and it seemed as if one more shove must send him down into the well, when all at once he heard a crash, succeeding the sound of blows which had previously saluted his ears; then there was a cheer, followed by a voice which he at once recognized as that of Bill Walsh.

"Down upon 'em, boys! Give it to 'em right and left! Let the rascals have it! We're here after Tibbits, we are, and if they don't tell us where he is we'll put a head on 'em all, such as they'll never forget!"

"This way, Bill—here I am!" shouted Tibbits.

A moment later Bill Walsh came bounding into the narrow passage, followed by half a dozen of his men. The ruffians who had been pushing Tibbits now arose, and at the same time Walsh caught a good view of Ned's legs, which he seemed at once to recognize. A desperate combat was going on. The party in the vault and the men of Liberty Hose were about equal in number. Bill Walsh, who had been giving some good blows, no sooner saw Tibbits's legs, then, with a bound, he sprang toward them. Durham, wrathful and dark, raised the hammer-handle, but ere he could use it, Bill sent both fists crashing into his eyes with such force that he fell over sideways.

"This way, boys!" shouted Walsh, in a ringing voice. "This way for Tibbits! To the rescue! Hoop—hoop—hoop-la!"

Who could oppose the Liberties now? Tibbits was the watchword, and you can bet it was a word that put the strength of two men in the arms of every one of the company. Oh, the way the Liberties pitched into the roughs was a sight worth seeing. Vainly the redoubtable Waxey, putting himself at the head of his gang, encouraged them with his words and his powerful blows. The Liberties seemed to walk "right through" their foes, striking out with a rapidity and vigor which none of their opponents could withstand. Meanwhile,

Bill Walsh hauled Tibbits from his uncomfortable position, and with a knife quickly severed his bonds.

"How are you, Ned, old boy," said little Bill, with tears in his eyes as he fairly hugged the gallant foreman.

"How are you, Bill?" responded Ned. "I'm a little weak on the pins, but I think I can help the boys in spite of it."

Then, raising his voice, he shouted:

"Fight on, Liberties! Spread yourselves, boys, and let 'em have it! They are not going to get the best of us this time."

As he spoke he sprang up and still encouraging his men, he fought like a young lion. There was science in the way he handled his fists. Sending them out to right and left with unerring precision, and in quick time, too, for there was never a man lighter on his toes than Tibbits, and the manner in which he danced about on the balls of his feet, as he delivered his sledge-hammer blows, was a caution to all his enemies. You can just make up your mind that they did not like it at all, while, at the same time, the whole crowd couldn't help admiring his powers. Bill Walsh wasn't behindhand, either. Oh, you would have laughed to have seen the way that game little "rooster" made his fists fly up into the eyes and noses of some of the gang who looked big enough to eat him. Side by side with Tibbits, Bill Walsh continued to assist his friends, and in less than a quarter of an hour later the vault was entirely cleared, and the Liberties remained masters of the rendezvous. The roughs had all fled, leaving the vault by the narrow passage leading to the outside opening into the rear.

Then it struck Ned that they had forgotten poor Tom Loper. Ned explained and a rush was made for the well. Ned perceived a rope in the vault and he carried that along. Coming to the well, Ned insisted he should be the one to go after Tom. Tying the rope around his waist, the boys lowered Ned. Hearing a groan, Ned was sure it was Tom. And it was. He found the poor fellow on top of some rocks that had fallen into the well, and above the water. Ned was not long in tying the rope around Tom and signaling to the boys to pull him up. Which was speedily accomplished after which Ned was hoisted up. A little brandy soon brought Tom to his senses, after which his wounds were attended to. Then the Liberty boys started for their homes. Great was the joy of Fanny Loper when she learned her brother and lover were both safe. Next day the police were notified of what had taken place and searched for the offenders, but they had gone off to parts unknown.

Shortly after the Smashers elected Jerry Bonemaker foreman of the company.

The following week came the chowder party of the Liberty Hose boys. Tommy Loper and Hattie, Bill Walsh's sweetheart, were among the invited guests. Arriving at the grounds and having had their dinner, Fanny and Hattie strolled off together. Coming to a deserted looking house, the girls signified their intention of exploring it. They found no fastening on the door and entered. After going through the ground floor rooms they ascended the back stairs to the upper part. Just as the girls were in one of the back rooms who should spring out of a closet but Baldy, the fore-



man of the Smashers, knife in hand. Grasping Fanny by the arm, he said: "Miss Loper, you want to come with me. I want you to be my wife. If you do not I will kill both of you right now."

"Consent, Fanny, consent!" faltered Hattie, hardly knowing what she said—"consent, and save both our lives!"

"Very well; I consent to go with you," gasped Fanny, hoping that she might contrive to escape him on the way.

"You consent to be my wife," cried Baldy, with a sort of savage joy.

"I did not say that."

"You said you would go with me?"

"Yes."

"All right; that means the same thing. Come!"

And as he spoke, he seized her by the arm.

"You do not require my friend to go with you, too?" said Fanny.

"No; but she must tell no tales; at least not until I've made sure of you as my wife."

"What are you going to do with her?" inquired Fanny.

"I am going to keep her shut up here until her friends come and take her out, if that ever happens."

He now made Fanny ascend to the foot of the ladder leading up to the scuttle.

"Mount," he said to her. "You must go before me. I'm not the boy to have any tricks played on me."

"I would first speak to my friend. I have something to say to her."

"Well, be quick about it."

Fanny went to Hattie, and whispered a few words in her ear. Then she returned to the foot of the ladder.

"Come, up you go!" said Baldy.

The young girl ran up the steps with the agility of a fawn. The moment she reached the roof she seized the ladder, just as Baldy was about to mount it, and pushing it inward, so that the bottom part slid along the floor, she allowed it to drop. It fell flat upon the floor.

"Hello! what did you do that for?" cried Baldy. "Yer can't come any such game on this boy!"

Fanny heard the door of the room in which Hattie was close at the same moment.

"Good!" she murmured. "She has done what I told her to do."

Then she heard the key turn in the lock, and she knew that her friend had locked the door.

"Now then," she cried, triumphantly to Baldy, "you thought you were going to have everything your own way, but I will show you that you were mistaken."

As she spoke she clapped the scuttle over the opening in the roof, and fastened it by means of the hooks, which, as stated, were on the outside. The hooks had evidently been placed there to secure the scuttle, as it fitted loosely, and might otherwise blow away, there being no fastening on the inside. Baldy, by this time, had replaced the ladder and mounted it.

"Let me out!" he roared, "or it will be the worse for you."

And he commenced to bang furiously at the scuttle.

"Don't be in a hurry," said Fanny, maliciously. "I dare say you will come out in good time."

"You shall suffer for this!" cried Baldy. "Fool that I was to permit you to go up before me!"

The young girl, standing up and gazing over the tops of the trees, could dimly see the forms of the Liberties still by the shore of the river.

Again and again did she wave her kerchief as a signal, but intervening masses of shrubbery would have screened her from the gaze of her friends, even had they chanced to look toward her.

The house was some distance from the place they occupied, so that neither by shouting nor signaling could she have made known her situation.

"Let me out!" repeated Baldy, as he continued to bang at the scuttle. "If you don't, I swear to you that I will kill your friend, who is still here!"

Fanny made no reply. She was still undecided whether to remain where she was, and trust to the Liberties coming toward the house and seeing her, or to leave the roof, and with all possible speed run to the party and tell them what had happened.

She did not like to quit her position.

She knew that Hattie had shut and locked the door of the room she occupied, but she feared that Baldy might succeed in battering it down while she was absent, and perhaps murder the girl before she (Fanny) could bring her friends to the rescue.

Finally, therefore, she concluded to remain.

Then, should Baldy break open the door, she could make her appearance before him in time to save Hattie's life.

She had no fear of his beating open the scuttle, for this was provided, as previously stated, with strong hooks. It had also an iron cross-bar, which she had taken care to put in its place.

"So you won't let me out, eh?" cried Baldy at last, desisting from his useless efforts to force the scuttle. "Well, then, your friend is as good as dead. I'm goin' for her now."

Fanny heard him descend the steps of the ladder; then she heard him bang at the door.

"Help—help! Oh, what will become of me?" screamed Hattie from the room.

Furiously Baldy continued to beat at the door.

All at once Fanny heard the door give way and swing back on its hinges as the lock was broken.

Then she heard the shrieks of the young girl, with which, however, was blended the sound of her fleeing footsteps.

She comprehended the truth in a moment.

Hattie had somehow contrived to elude Baldy, probably by getting near the door, so that she was behind it when it was forced open, and she was now speeding along the hall, hoping to find some place of refuge.

Fanny unbarred and unhooked the scuttle, and entering the garret, she listened.

The sounds of pursuer and pursued now were heard in the rooms below as they had descended the stairs.

Fanny trembled in every limb. She pictured the fear of Hattie with that ruffian Baldy, a dagger in his hand, close behind, in chase of her.

"Stop, Baldy, stop! Don't harm her. I have opened the scuttle. I am here!"

But there came no response.



Her fright had hindered her speaking loud enough to make her voice heard.

All at once she heard a terrible noise.

It was a half-smothered gurgling, something between a rattling in the throat and a shriek.

Then came Hattie's voice, now faintly borne to the ears of the listener.

"Help—help—help! Oh, God, have mercy!"

The next moment all was still.

## CHAPTER X.—The Cellar.

Fanny stood as if fastened to the floor. She had not the power to move. Her terror was so great that she felt as if her heart was about to be stilled forever. Neither the voice of Baldy nor of her friend was now heard. A dead silence reigned throughout the old, gloomy house. At last, by a great effort, the young girl controlled herself.

"Hattie—Hattie!" she called.

There was no response.

"He has killed her—she is dead!" murmured Fanny.

But if so, where was Baldy? Slowly Fanny descended the stairs. She now found herself in a large, gloomy hall, dimly lighted by a window, half boarded up on one side. She hurried on until she came to a door, which she found fastened. This was simply the back door of the hall. It was partially boarded up, and the lock, which was visible, had in it no key. Behind her she felt a draught of cool air, and on turning he beheld a door which was open. She looked through the opening. At first, owing to the darkness, she could see nothing, but gradually, as her eyes became accustomed to the gloom, she could make out a number of casks. Then she comprehended that she was now at the head of a staircase leading into the cellar of the house. This cellar was packed with casks, which emitted a peculiar oily odor.

"Hattie—Hattie!" she called.

No reply. Slowly she descended the staircase; then she peered carefully through the darkness. At first she could make out nothing but the casks. Gradually, however, she was enabled to distinguish a strange form. It was that of a hideous old hag, with matted hair, blazing eyeballs, and a face almost as thin as a skeleton's. She wore a tattered dress, there were no shoes on her feet; in fact, she was a miserable object to look upon. The expression of her eyes was wild and vacant. One glance convinced Fanny that she was insane.

"Good Heaven!" cried the young girl, "who are you?"

"Who am I?" said the odd hag, looking up, "who am I? Yes—yes, you are right!"

As she spoke the woman, who had been seated on a cask arose and moved to one side. There, stretched senseless upon the casks, Fanny beheld the form of her friend Hattie, and not far from it, that of Baldy, who was also unconscious.

"Hah—hah!" shrieked the hag, pointing to the Smashers' foreman. "He's a good boy—a good boy, but I thought I'd punish him for never coming to see me. His mother I am—and I've wanted to see him a long time, and ask him how he gets along."

Fanny shuddered. A light broke upon her mind. She doubted not that the miserable creature she saw before her was really Baldy's mother. She had heard that he had a mother in an insane asylum somewhere near the Hudson river. This unfortunate person had evidently contrived, as lunatics sometimes do, to escape from the asylum. She had come upon the old house, had entered the building and made her way to the cellar. On seeing her son enter the cellar, a few minutes previous to the present time, in pursuit of Hattie, she had struck him over the head with a stout stick or club, which she now held in her right hand. Then, having thus knocked him senseless, she had probably seized Hattie by the throat, at which time it was that Fannie had heard her friend utter those gurgling cries for help. A moment later the terrified girl had fainted, and then the crazy woman had let go of her. All these thoughts passed through Fanny's mind very quickly.

"What do you want here?" cried the hag, brandishing her club. "This is my home—this is my cave! Away—away!"

And she advanced toward Fanny as she spoke. At that instant Baldy half-raised himself with a groan. The hag turned and looked toward him.

"So you are awake at last!" she cried.

With another groan, Baldy staggered to his feet. Before he could see her, Fanny took refuge behind the cellar door. All at once she heard a cry of rage and disgust from Baldy. The old woman, his mother, was evidently advancing toward him with her club upraised. Fanny heard him rush up the cellar steps. His mother followed at his heels, shrieking out:

"No, you don't! You don't escape me!"

"Curse it! Who would have thought of meeting her here. She has spoiled all my plans!" murmured Baldy, as he hurried along through the hall.

"My son—my boy, come back!" screamed his mother.

But Baldy kept on, and Fanny felt sure that he would quit the house.

"Thank God—they will both leave the house!" said Fanny to herself. "And now for poor Hattie!"

Before returning to the cellar, however, she peered through a crack in the boards over the window, and saw Baldy descending the stoop. He ran swiftly as soon as he reached the ground, and plunged into the shrubbery in the distance. Soon after the young girl saw his mother also descend the stoop. Seen by the clear light outside, the face of the unfortunate woman, who had been crazed by liquor, bore some resemblance to that of her son. On reaching the foot of the steps, she ran along toward the thicket in the distance. Fanny now hurried into the cellar. As she knelt by the side of her friend, Hattie opened her eyes.

"Where am I?" she said, looking wildly around her.

"Here!" said Fanny. "I am with you."

Hattie seemed, for some moments, quite bewildered.

"Oh, yes, I remember now!" she suddenly cried. "That horrid man—that horrid woman! Where are they, Fanny?"

"Gone!" answered Fanny.



"Are you sure?"

"Come with me, and let us see. Are you able to walk?"

"Oh, yes; now that I know we are safe."

The two girls left the cellar, and both looked through the cracks of the boards over the window in the hall. To their dismay, they saw Baldy again ascending the stoop.

"Oh, dear," gasped Fanny, "he has been watching, and not having seen us leave the house, he judges that we are still here."

"What shall we do?" said Hattie.

"We must hide."

"But where?"

Fanny looked around her. Suddenly her gaze was caught by a large rope, having a hook at the end of it.

"That rope must be there to hoist these casks with," she cried. "There is a platform projecting from the side of the cellar, about five feet above the casks. Do you see it?"

"Yes," said Hattie.

"Well, that platform is in the shadow. No person could see us if we were there. We must climb to it by the rope, pull up the rope after us, and crouch down."

"Let us make haste," said Hattie, as the sound of Baldy's descending footsteps was heard.

The two girls were soon on the platform, crouching in the darkness. Ten minutes later Baldy entered the cellar and looked around him. He could not have seen the young women, even had he had a light. There was a plank on the edge of the platform high enough to conceal their forms as they both lay flat. Having looked carefully around him and convinced himself that the persons he sought were not there, Baldy left the cellar to look for them in other parts of the building. The two girls could hear his heavy footsteps as he wandered in his search from room to room. At last they heard him returning to the cellar.

"Well," he muttered, "one thing is sure, they have not left the house. Where are you?" he called out in a loud voice. Of course, the girls made no reply.

"I say, where are you?" shouted Baldy again, with all his might.

Hattie had, by this time, so far recovered from her terror that she could not help feeling amused at hearing the man calling her and her companion, when both were within a few feet of him. With difficulty could she repress a giggle, which, in fact, was only prevented by Fanny pinching her arm.

"Come, now," cried Baldy again. "Are yer here or not? If you are, you'd best answer me, or there'll be trouble for yer."

He then stood listening for a few seconds, but of course there was no reply.

"Well," cried the ruffian, in a rage, "if yer won't answer me, yer won't; and now there's goin' to be mischief."

His gaze was fixed upon the casks, dimly visible in the cellar.

"I happen to know," he continued, now speaking to himself, "that them casks have petroleum in 'em. They were put in this cellar for safe-keeping by a firm who have a fact'ry not far from here, so that they might be in a handy place for

transportation to the river. Petroleum will go off like gunpowder, and I mean to make this 'ere petroleum go off in that way."

"God help us!" whispered Fanny to Hattie. "Did you hear that? He is going to explode the petroleum, which, it seems, these casks contain."

Baldy had left the cellar, and so he did not hear the whisper.

"Had we not better leave our hiding-place, then?" said Hattie, in great terror.

Fanny reflected a moment ere she answered.

"We had better remain where we are for the present," she then said. "Of course, that bad man will not dare to explode the petroleum at once when he undertakes to carry out his purpose, because if he did he would be destroyed as well as ourselves. He will prepare some kind of a wisp or train, will light the end and leave it to burn down to the edge. Then the explosion will take place, or rather, would take place were we not here to prevent it. We can extinguish the wisp."

"Would you not be afraid to do that?"

"No; there would be no danger with a little care. But hush! Here he comes."

In fact, Baldy now re-entered the cellar. He was provided with a piece of tarred canvas which he had torn from the boards over one of the windows. This canvas he rolled up into the wisp; then he crept along over the top of the casks until he reached the center. With his penknife he proceeded to make an incision in the head of this cask. Having finally succeeded in making a hole large enough, he thrust the end of the wisp into it. Then he took from a box in his pocket a match, which he lighted. As the gleam from it spread through the cellar, he looked around him. He saw the platform at one end, but as the girls were crouched behind the high board on the edge of it, and as the momentary light from the match hardly reached their hiding-place, they were not observed.

"Now, then," murmured Baldy, "those young women must still be somewhere in the building, and the explosion can't fail to shatter the house. Ha, ha! Miss Loper, I'm a-goin' to be even with yer now!"

As he spoke he lighted the end of the wisp. Having assured himself that it would burn down to the cask, he turned quickly to leave the cellar, so as to make his escape as soon as possible from the now dangerous house. But as he moved hurriedly along his leg slipped over the edge of one of the casks, and down went the limb between it and another cask. Clutching the edge of this cask as he fell, he caused it to slip in such a way over another upon which it was placed, that it fell against his leg, holding it so tightly that he was unable to discharge it. The wretched man, fully comprehending the horror of his situation, made desperate efforts to free himself. He writhed, he twisted his body from side to side, he pushed at the cask, vainly endeavoring to move it. For a minute he continued his useless exertions, without looking at the wisp.

He did not like to look at it; the very thought made his blood run cold. But now he ventured to steal a glance at it, and he noticed that it was burning steadily toward the end—that it was already nearly half-way down. No hope of its



going out—not the least. He had prepared it too well for that, little dreaming at the time that he would be caught in the horrid trap he had prepared for others. The perspiration came out like rain on his forehead, as he renewed his struggles to free himself from his terrible situation. He became desperate, and pulled so at his leg that he almost dislocated it. Wildly gesticulating with his arms, he called for assistance.

"Miss Loper, where are you?" he yelled. "For God's sake, come and try to help me get clear! I am caught here among the casks, in the cellar! The petroleum is going to blow up, and I shall be a dead man!"

Even as he pronounced her name, Fanny Loper, followed by Hattie, got down from the platform.

"We must be quick!" said Hattie, "or we are lost!"

"Put out the wisp," shouted Baldy, "then come and help me!"

"You have given us good reason to wish to help you!" said Fanny.

"I know I've done wrong—I know I have!" cried Baldy, pitifully, "but don't be too hard on a feller, miss—don't. It's the way I've been brought up—always mixing with men of jest the hardest kind."

Fanny looked at the burning wisp without answering. Then she moved quickly toward it. But Baldy, in fixing it in its place, had, unconsciously, tipped up a cask in front of it, which was only about half-full. This cask, as Fanny was endeavoring to climb over it, slipped and fell, so that it overhung the head of the one containing the piece of tarred cloth. The young girl just saved herself from going with it by nimbly stepping backward. The fallen cask was in her way. She might, with great exertion, have succeeded in getting around it, but it would have taken so long to do this that she feared the explosion would take place ere she would have time to remove or to extinguish the wisp.

"I can do nothing now," she said to Hattie.

"Come—come away!" cried the latter.

"I am afraid I will have to," answered Fanny.

"Oh, no, Miss Loper!" shrieked Baldy. "Don't—don't leave me in this plight. You can reach that wisp in time to put it out."

"I do not think so," said Fanny.

"Nor I—nor I!" cried Hattie. "Come, let us go!"

"Oh, dear, bad as this man is, I do not like to leave him in this situation!" cried Fanny, with that true benevolence natural to the female character.

"It does not seem exactly the thing to do," said Hattie, "but I do not see as there is any help for it."

"At any rate," said Fanny, "we will try and move away the cask from his leg."

"If we succeed in freeing him he will shut us up here in the cellar to die," said Hattie.

"No! Oh, no, I won't. I'm not the boy to do anything quite so bad as that!" whined Baldy.

Fanny believed him. It did not seem possible to her that there could be any human being evil enough to injure those who should help to save his life.

"Come, Hattie," she said. "We must be quick. There is no time to lose!"

She made her way to the cask which had slipped against Baldy's leg, and then Hattie followed. The two young women, assisted by the unfortunate man, tugged and tugged at it in vain. They could not even budge the heavy cask.

"We can do no more!" said Miss Loper, who was almost exhausted. "We will have to leave you."

"Leave me?" shrieked Baldy. "No—no. I'm lost if yer do."

"We would be lost, too," said Hattie. "I shouldn't wonder if it is too late, even now, for us to escape!"

"You shall not leave me!" cried Baldy, fiercely. "No, if I am to die, you shall die, too!"

And as he spoke he caught Fanny by the arm, and held her with an iron grip.

## CHAPTER XI.—Conclusion.

Fanny Loper, when she found herself thus held in the grasp of the wretched man, whose life she had just been striving to save, was both terrified and indignant.

"Let go of me!" she cried, struggling with all her might.

But Baldy kept his hold, while through the partial gloom his eyes gleamed like balls of flame.

"We shall be blown up together," he yelled, triumphantly. "I shall have my revenge after all!"

Vainly Fanny endeavored to free herself. The grasp of the villain was like that of a vise. Hattie endeavored for a while to pull her friend away from Baldy, but she was soon exhausted.

"Run, Hattie, and save yourself!" cried Fanny. "There is no other way. If I must be sacrificed, it is no reason that you should be, too!"

Hattie wrung her hands and began to cry, as she left the cellar.

"Good-by, Fanny, if it must be so," she sobbed.

"Good-by," answered Fanny, "and God bless you!"

Hattie ran with full speed up the stairs, and soon gained the door. She looked eagerly about the broad extent of country now exposed to her view, for some person or persons whom she might summon to the rescue of her friend, forgetting for the moment that long ere they could reach the imperiled girl the explosion must take place, and, in the most horrible manner, put an end to the life of her beloved friend.

Hattie was not long in reaching the outside. The moment her feet touched the earth she started on a run toward the river bank, where the Liberties were still gathered; but she had not proceeded more than fifty yards when the uselessness of seeking the assistance of her male friends occurred to her, and she paused, turning her gaze back in the direction of the house.

"No use; it would blow up even before I could reach our party," she cried, despairingly. "Oh, Fanny, Fanny! Poor Fanny!"

Scarcely had she uttered the words, when there came a report, like that of a hundred thunderbolts, seeming to shake the ground under her very feet. The old house tottered for a moment, then it fell with crushing timbers, and a dense volume



of smoke and flame enveloped it, for an instant, like a flaming shroud. With one long, wild, despairing cry Hattie, throwing up both arms, fell senseless to the earth. Where now was Fanny? After her friend left her, she had renewed her struggle to get away from Baldy, meanwhile beseeching him to let her go. At length, by one desperate effort, she succeeded in twisting her supple form so far from him, that, unable to clasp her with both arms, owing to an intervening cask, and to his legs being confined as described, which kept him in one position, his hold was slightly loosened.

"No, yer don't!" he cried, fiercely, making an effort to regain a firm grasp of the girl.

But in doing so he twisted his leg so that it caused him the most excruciating pain, and in his agony he entirely lost his hold of Fanny. Finding herself free, she darted up the cellar stairs, and ran to the door at the back of the hall.

She opened it and passed through it as quickly as she could, to find herself now on the back stoop of the building. A few yards off there was a small brick house, not more than seven feet high. She thought it had once been a smoke-house or something of that sort; at all events, it might serve to partially shield her when the catastrophe she expected should occur. The little building having no door she speedily entered it, to find herself at the head of a flight of stone steps. Quickly descending these, she entered a sort of stone apartment provided with shelves, by which she knew that she was in a milk dairy—a place in which the inhabitants of the old Dutch building once kept their milk and cheese. Scarcely had she time to look around her when she heard the thunder of the explosion, followed by the rushing of huge pieces of timber and planks, as they fell upon the little habitation to which she had retreated. The bricks gave way, and many of them fell at her feet. Gazing upward, she perceived that a great mass of lumber now covered the passageway through which she had come.

Through openings in this mass of joists and broken plank, she could see the glare of the flames, which now enveloped the building on every side. Shuddering at her narrow escape, she gazed upward at the crackling, roaring sheets of fire as they surged skyward through the rolling smoke. Then she thought of Baldy, whose disfigured body must now lie buried in the burning ruins of the cellar. The old building burned rapidly, and finally, blending with the noise of the flames, Fanny could hear the shouts of men outside, and among them she fancied she could recognize the voice of Ned Tibbits. She called with all her might, but, far down as she was, under the falling timbers, she doubted if her weak voice was strong enough to be heard by her lover.

He would think she had perished, for, ere now, Hattie must have met him and have explained to him her situation, there in the cellar of the house. In about an hour there was little of the old building left. Fanny mounted the stone steps, and peered through the openings in the timbers piled about the entrance of the ruined little dairy building; but she could see no sign of the men whose voices she had previously heard. In fact, Ned Tibbits, overwhelmed by the disaster which he believed had deprived him of the girl he loved, had, followed by his companions, gone to the same

grove where the girls had gone when they left the chowder party. There he sat on a log, with his face buried in his hands.

"Boys," he said, at last, in a husky voice that drew tears to the eyes of the hardy men who had followed him through so many perils, "boys, leave me alone for a little while."

They exchanged melancholy glances, and sadly they withdrew, the weeping Hattie accompanying them, leaning on the arm of her lover, Tom Loper. When Ned was left to himself he took from his pocket a miniature likeness of Fanny, and gazed at it long and earnestly. Meanwhile Fanny, down in the vault of the dairy, stood in a listening attitude, hoping that the Liberties would return. At last she heard voices, but she knew they were not those of Tibbits and his party. Other people had noticed the glare of the fire, and had probably come from a distance to see it. But they did not yet approach the pile of timbers heaped up over the ruins of the dairy house, and the young girl knew that she could not make them hear her.

At last, however, footsteps sounded near her retreat. She ran up the stones, and peered through the openings among the beams and planks. All at once she drew back with a low cry of dismay. A weird, wild-looking figure was just outside of the debris, looking through the crevices of the pile. Fanny could see this creature plain enough to recognize her at a glance. It was Baldy's mother—the same crazy woman who had previously so frightened her and Hattie in the cellar of the Dutch house. That this person saw the girl was now evident, for she commenced to pluck at the joists and boards with her claw-like hands, and to throw them to one side. She worked with almost superhuman strength and rapidity, and soon she had made an opening in the pile large enough to admit her wasted, skeleton form. Fanny had crouched upon the stone steps. It did not take the woman long to force her way to the entrance of the vault—to the head of the stone steps. There she stood, looking down at Fanny, who was now upon her feet, her gaze meeting that of the crazy woman.

"Ha—ha! so I have you!" cried the latter, in a wild, fierce voice. "Where is my Baldy? What have you done with my son?"

"He was lost," answered Fanny.

"Lost? It was your fault! You are the one that lured him to his fate! How can I ever collect his bones for burial?"

"I had nothing to do with his death; in fact, I tried to save him."

"Oh, yes!" cried the woman, with a hideous laugh. "So you say, but you cannot deceive me. Now, then, as I cannot get at any part of my son to bury, I am going to bury you!"

Then, suddenly, with a cry something like that of a hyena, she threw herself upon her intended victim, and clutched her by the arms. Fanny screamed with all her might, while she writhed and struggled to free herself from the hag, whose bony fingers sank into her flesh as if they were made of steel.

"I've got yer, my beauty! Ha, ha! Come along!" cried the lunatic, as she drew Fanny up the stone steps.

The young girl continued to scream, but her captor drew her on into the opening she had made among the timbers.



"Now, I'm going to bury you!" she cried.

With that she threw Fanny down, and in spite of her struggles, contrived, with her old shawl, to fasten her to a heavy beam.

"Yes," she then continued, "I am going to bury you in the timber, which I mean to pile upon you as high as a mountain, so that you can never get up!"

Vainly Fanny struggled to arise. The hag commenced to lay boards and joists upon her rapidly, and soon her prostrate form was nearly covered. The weight became every moment more hard to bear. The young girl felt as if she was being crushed. Her limbs ached with the fast-increasing pressure, which, as plank after plank was laid upon her, became terrible. She could scarcely breathe—she was suffocating. Her brain throbbed and reeled, and a sort of mist, through which she could see the round, greenish orbs of the hag gleaming like those of some horrible ogre, seemed to gather before her vision. She felt that all would soon be over; she was, in fact, becoming unconscious, when suddenly she fancied she heard loud voices near her, the terrible hag seemed to recede, and she experienced a sensation of blissful relief.

"Fanny—Fanny! Speak to me!" rang a familiar voice in her ears.

Full consciousness returned to her, the mist cleared from before her eyes, and she saw the bright, cheerful face of Tibbits, as, with one arm supporting her head on his breast, he looked down upon her.

"Oh, Ned!" she said, and she raised her lips to his for a kiss, which was heartily given.

Then Fanny staggered to her feet, assisted by her lover, to find herself the next moment in the arms of her friend Hattie.

"Fanny—Fanny! Thank God you are saved!" she cried.

Then the air rang with the cheers of the Liberties as they all gathered around.

"How did you rescue me?" inquired Fanny of Tom Loper, who now came up and embraced her. "And where is that dreadful woman? I hope you have not harmed her, for she was crazy."

"She is not harmed. She is in the charge of people who will take her back to the asylum, from which, it seems, she escaped a few days ago. It was Tibbits who saved you. He came back to the fire, when he fancied he heard a scream. This led him to the pile of timber, where he found you in the clutch of the hag. He shouted to the rest of us to come up, and you can bet it didn't take him long to reach you and pull that crazy woman away from you. The rest of us came up,

and some took charge of her, while the others helped Tibbits remove the timber from you and clear a passage to carry you outside of the pile. Now then, tell us, Fan, how you came there."

The young girl explained in a few words. Then, supported by Tibbits, and followed by the rest of the company, she was conducted to the riverbank, where a little wine refreshed her and partially restored her strength. The whole party were soon after in the boat on their return to their homes, which they reached in due time. A week later Tibbits and Fanny Loper were married. All the Liberties were at the wedding, and they made a pleasant party. Ned and his pretty wife were well mated. A happier couple were never united in the sacred bonds of matrimony. But he did not resign his position of foreman. Even to-day, though he is a great deal older than when our story occurred, and has a little curly-headed Ned of his own, he is still leader and master spirit, with Billy Walsh as his assistant, of Liberty Hose, the Pride of Plattsville.

Next week's issue will contain "AMONG THE SUN WORSHIPERS; or, TWO NEW YORK BOYS IN PERU."

## 7,480,201 POPULATION IN GREATER LONDON

Some interesting figures on the population of Greater London are disclosed by the latest census, which gives the total number of inhabitants as 7,480,201, the highest on record.

In the County of London alone the number have increased from 959,310 in 1801 to 4,484,623 in 1921, the latter figures being made up of 2,071,579 males and 2,413,044 females.

The males have decreased in the last ten years by 54,762 and the females increased by 17,600. The proportion of females to 1,000 males has risen from 1,127 in 1911 to 1,165 in 1921, and there has been an increase of 25,922 in widows during that period, attributed largely to the war.

The ratio of unmarried females to 1,000 unmarried males has increased from 1,138 to 1,287 in the age group of 20 to 29 and from 1,413 to 1,886 in the age group of 30 to 39.

In the County of London, of 1,120,987 private families, approximately 38 per cent., or 424,696, are in single occupation of separate dwellings; 32 per cent., or 360,758, are living two to a dwelling, and 30 per cent. are housed in dwellings containing three or more families each.



## CURRENT NEWS

## OREGON'S "SOAP LAKE"

"Soap Lake" is in the northwestern part of Oregon. If the water is stirred or beaten with a stick it foams thick suds. When rubbed between the hands it has a soapy feeling. Animals refuse to drink the water.

## JOB FOR PIED PIPER

Any modern Pied Piper can have a job at the Capitol. Superintendent Elliot Woods will see that he gets well paid for his melodies. But he must make good.

Rats are becoming so numerous at the Capitol as to be a pest. They are attracted in large part by the quantities of garden seeds which are sent out to constituents from the offices of the members of the Senate and the House.

Shortly before adjournment Congress appropriated \$4,500 to exterminate the rodents. An expert was employed. He made liberal use of poison which, unfortunately, killed some of the rats but left their bodies scattered about the buildings. Thereupon the exterminator quit the job. There are regiments of rats left, and a new expert is wanted.

## ABOUT WATCHES

It is well known that a watch will stop for some unexplained reason and go on again all right if it is given a slight jolt. The same trouble may not occur again for years. This is an accident to which all watches are liable when worn on the person. It is due to the delicate hairspring catching in the hairspring stud or in the regulating pins. The cause is generally a sudden jump or quick movement, such as boarding a car, etc., etc.

A watch should be oiled every eighteen months, because no oil can be made which will not dry up in that time. A watch will sometimes run a number of years without oiling, but the wear and tear on a watch in which the oil is dried up is much greater than when it is regularly and properly oiled. Never attempt to oil your watch. Let a watchmaker attend to it. One of the most perplexing faults to find is a little burr on the tooth of a wheel. This rarely happens, but when it does it causes a good deal of trouble.

Women and watches do not agree. In proportion to the number sold there are twice as many watches repaired for women as for men. Women rarely wind a watch up regularly. A watch should always be wound every morning, so that the spring shall be at its strongest tension during the day.

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# The Vanishing Of Val Vane

— Or, —

## THE TROUBLES OF A BOY MILLIONAIRE

By WILLIAM WADE

(A SERIAL STORY)

### CHAPTER III.—(Continued.)

Val would have left the city, but this was impossible, for there was much to be done before he could gain complete control of his property.

And was this all?

No, no!

We must not forget the dear ladies!

If Val had wanted to get married now was certainly his chance, for it was a poor day which did not bring him half a dozen proposals by mail, and in several instances the dear creatures had the audacity to attempt a personal interview.

Jack found that "shooing away the girls" was no dream.

It began in early June and in late July there was a let up.

The boys were away in their car more or less, making many trips into New England and elsewhere.

Val would have run down to his mine, but Mr. Eastman would not hear of it, and for the present at least he felt bound to respect his wishes.

There was one woman—a Mrs. Wheeler, according to her card—who made no less than six attempts to get at the boy millionaire.

What her business was she would not state, nor did she ever address Val by letter.

Jack called her "the mysterious widow" because she dressed in black. She was a person of about forty and very good-looking. Val was for seeing her at first, but Jack persuaded him out of it.

"If she won't tell her business don't you let her get a sight of you," he said. "You can't tell what she's driving at. She may throw a bomb at you for all you know."

That she had tried her best to fascinate him Jack could have added, but he kept it to himself, as well as the fact that she had hinted at paying him if he would arrange for her to meet Val.

It had come to a point where half their daily conversation was about these cranks, and Jack, knowing that Val was growing heartily sick of it, was resolved to spare him as much as possible.

One Saturday afternoon in early August Val was not feeling very well.

"Let's go for a ride somewhere over in Jersey," he said to Jack, after dinner. "I'll run the car myself, so we can have a good talk. Just as quick as I can I mean to break away from New York altogether for a while and then we will be rid of all this nuisance."

Jack assented, of course, and the car was summoned.

At this time the boys were living at a private hotel away up on one of the cross streets on Broadway, where the table was in family style, for Val could not seem to relish French cooking.

They ran down to the Fort Lee ferry, and crossing, ascended the Palisades. Here Val drove the car along the Hudson Boulevard for a considerable distance.

It was a new country for him and he enjoyed it.

"We want to get a view of the river," he said at length. "The next policeman we come to we'll ask."

There were policemen stationed along the boulevard, as there are many fine residences standing isolated in the woods.

The one Val inquired of informed him that if he entered the woods by a certain path a minute's walk would take him to the edge of the cliff, where an extended view of the river and the city of Yonkers could be had, so when they came to the path Val put his car dead and the boys went to the edge of the Palisades.

There were a few people there on the rocks, but soon they went away and the boys sat down near the edge of the cliff and talked for nearly half an hour.

At last Jack began to grow nervous about the car.

"Oh, pshaw! It's safe enough with the pin in my pocket," declared Val. "No one's going to tow the thing away on a Sunday afternoon."

"I'll just run out and have a look if you are not ready to go," said Jack.

"Go on, then, if it will ease your mind," replied Val. "I want to stay here a while longer. Then we will run on to Piermont and have supper at the inn the policeman told us about."

So Jack went back to the boulevard, where he found the car safe.

He was returning slowly through the woods when he saw a woman flit past him among the trees at some little distance away.

She shot one look at him and then turned her head. For some reason she appeared to be in a great hurry.

Jack walked slowly on and then something impelled him to look back again.

The woman had vanished, but as he turned around he saw her heading for the edge of the Palisades.

He had not been able to see her face distinctly, but now it seemed to come to him that there was something about the woman which reminded him of "Mrs. Wheeler."

"It's her black clothes," thought Jack.

Just the same he quickened his pace.

Val was standing at the very edge of the precipice when he came in sight of him, looking off on the river.

Suddenly to his horror Jack saw the woman in black glide out of the woods and go stealing towards Val. She was bent low; she reminded him of a cat crouching for a spring.

"Heavens! I believe she means to push Val over!" flashed upon the boy.

At the same instant the woman gave a quick dart forward.

(To be Continued.)



## ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

### HIS MONEY FLEW

Business men of the vicinity of the First National Bank, Paris, Ky., the other afternoon were surprised on gazing toward the sky to see the air full of \$5, \$10 and \$20 bills. Edmund Sharp, an employee of a market, had gone to the bank to make a deposit. As he stepped from his machine in front of the building, he dropped the bankbook containing several hundred dollars in bills. A sudden gust of wind scattered the money.

A wild scramble ensued. Scores of men and boys joined in the rush, a part of the bills being found a mile from the scene of the loss.

### "BURGLAR" WAS A PIG

Hunt Station police, Detroit, Mich., headed by Lieut. John Sosinski, participated in an exciting "burglar" chase early one morning which resulted in the capture in a shed of a black and white pig with a brass collar around its neck, whose grunting and squealing at 4 a. m. so alarmed a milkman that he rushed into the station and said that a man was breaking into a nearby house. Lieut. Sosinski and his men ran across the street from the station, and the Lieutenant, George Gries and Lawrence Kieffer, patrolmen, finally cornered the pig. One thing more—Whose pig is it?

### DIGS HIS OWN GRAVE

William J. Morris, octogenarian, of Concord, a village four miles from Seaford, Del., has made all arrangements for his departing from this world.

He has dug his own grave in the Concord Cemetery and placed a concrete vault therein for the casket containing his body, in addition to selecting his pallbearers, officiating minister, etc., for his burial.

Morris, while he has made all arrangements for his burial, looks good for many years to come. During a homecoming of the Sons of Concord, held in the village in August, and one James Cannon, another octogenarian of the hamlet, danced several jigs and otherwise furnished entertainment for the visitors.

### UNEARTH GREEK TOWN IN ITALY

Italy's leading archaeologists are deeply interested in a discovery which promises to throw light on early Italo-Greek history.

As the result of casual digging by some youths what is believed to be the old Greek town of Sireon has been revealed near Sorrento and not far from Naples. Sireon was believed to have been the sanctuary of the Sirens (the sea nymphs who lured mariners to destruction by their singing) and as such is mentioned by Virgil (Aeneid, book 5, verse 864), Strabo (the Roman geographer, who lived at the same time), Homer and Hesiod, a contemporary of Homer.

So far one of the city gates has been unearthed. They are of enormous blocks of tufa (volcanic stone) carefully smoothed and fitted. A party wall has also been exposed.

### BAD LUCK IN 2-DOLLAR BILLS

The reasons for the superstition that \$2 bills bring bad luck are problematical.

One popular explanation is that folks are afraid they will pass a "two" for a "one," says the *Boston Globe*. Gamblers and sports, particularly, carry their money in heavy rolls with the largest bills inside, and claim that it is easy to peel a \$2 bill from the outside and pass it for a "one." Arguments and disputes with shopkeepers frequently follow as to the denomination of the bill passed.

Again, folks who handle large numbers of small bills are likely to get a \$2 not sandwiched in with a number of \$1 bills and in counting forget to make allowance for the extra "seed."

Still another possible reason for the jinx was suggested by a Boston banker.

"Two-dollars bills are frequently used by counterfeiters and crooks," said he. "A man can split a \$2 bill right through the middle, then split a twenty—paste one part of the two with another half of the twenty and thus make two twenties out of a \$20 and a \$2 bill. By passing the \$20 side up they can get away with it more often than you would believe."

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## THE MAN WITH THE HATCHET

By HORACE APPLETON

The night I landed in St. Petersburg is rained. An hour later the rain had turned to snow, and such a snow storm I never saw before and never want to see again.

You see, I was almost famished, for I had not tasted a bite of anything since leaving Warsaw—that's in Poland, you know—and I made for a restaurant the moment I left the train, and spent that hour at the table; for it takes time to get anything to eat in Russia, and, as a rule, it is not good for much after you get it, in my of thinking. I was a New York boy, and if New York boys don't know what is good to eat, I should like to know who does.

You see, I was at Columbia College, in my first year, when word suddenly reached me that my father, who had gone to Russia on business, had suddenly dropped dead of heart disease while walking along the Newsky Prospect.

He left \$75,000 on deposit with Boudelwitzky & Pokemoff, his agents, and they, owing to some complication or other, refused to give it up unless I, my father's only heir, appeared before them in person, and testified to a certain private matter into which I do not care to go.

The upshot of it was I received a letter from Count Stewiacke, my father's friend, telling me to come to St. Petersburg at once, and I went.

As I said before, I arrived there on the night of the big snow storm. After dinner at the restaurant before mentioned I took a sleigh for the Hotel des Italians, to which I had been directed, and when I went to pay for the ride I discovered that I had been robbed of my last cent. I was in a bad fix. The driver of the telega made a fearful row, sputtered away in Russian, shook his fist in my face, drew a crowd, and finally wound up by seizing my valise and making off with it, leaving me in a worse fix than ever.

It was after midnight, and snowing furiously. I was only a boy of eighteen, and could not speak a word of Russian nor any other language except English. I knew no one in St. Petersburg. Even my letter of introduction to Count Stewiacke was in my valise, which I had not been able to secure as yet.

As the crowd began to press about me, I grew frightened. I had an idea that every stranger in Russia lived in momentary danger of being hustled off to Siberia. Now, I did not want to go to Siberia, so I went into the hotel.

I had just made up my mind that the only thing for me to do was to put myself in the hands of the police, when two gentlemen forced their way to my side, and to my intense relief addressed me in my native tongue.

"What's the trouble, young man?" demanded one, a tall, well-dressed person, with a long black beard. I told him my situation in a few words. He spoke hastily to his companion in Russian, and then turned and addressed the crowd, which immediately dispersed.

"You have had a narrow escape," he said, speaking in English again. "It is a very danger-

ous thing for a young stranger like you, who can't speak our language, to find himself alone in St. Petersburg by night. Have you no friends?"

I mentioned the name of Count Stewiacke.

"Good! You shall see the count in the morning," said my protector. "For to-night you must come with me, and I will give you a bed in my house. My name is Smith. I am an Englishman. You may thank your stars that I came upon you as I did, for I have lived in St. Petersburg for years, and know the ropes."

He led me through several streets until at last we paused before a small, gloomy-looking dwelling, into which we entered.

Once we were inside the house, a neat little supper was served, and after I had eaten all I wished, and told these strangers all my business, I retired to a small room on the ground floor, very thankful that I had found such kind friends. I undressed myself and went to bed, but somehow I could not sleep. For an hour I lay there, tossing and turning, when suddenly I heard a noise at the window shutter which sent my heart up into my throat. A cold blast struck me, and the snow came whirling into the little chamber in one great gust.

The window had been thrown open and through it sprang a man. He would have frightened the boldest person who ever breathed. He was young, but little older than myself, and dressed in a shabby uniform. He wore no hat, and his hair was badly tousled; his eyes blazed with all the fire of madness. He carried a glittering hatchet in his hand, which he waved wildly as he leaped toward the bed, hissing out some unintelligible sentences in Russian.

I did not dare to move. I could only watch him. He took off every stitch of clothing, and then made me get up and take off the undershirt which I wore.

Of course I demurred, but there was no help for it. He shook the hatchet at me and off came the shirt.

I put on his clothes and he put on mine. I was the man with the hatchet—all but the hatchet; that he kept himself. Brandishing his hatchet at me he unlocked the door, then went out into the hall, taking the key with him and locking the door on the outside.

It took me a good five minutes to recover from my astonishment. Then I began to think, and remember that this stranger had all my private papers. That those other strangers—such obliging gentlemen—knew all my private business; that I had even been fool enough to tell them about the \$75,000.

After thinking the matter over, I came to the conclusion that the best thing I could do was to climb out of the window and put myself in charge of the first policeman I met.

I paused suddenly. My breath almost stopped. I had not heard a sound at the window, but there were two soldiers peering in.

Perceiving that they were observed, one of them raised his musket and covered me, at the same time calling out something in Russian.

The second soldier leaped in through the window and handcuffed me. The next thing I knew I was dragged out of the window and found myself hurried through the sloppy streets.

At last we came to a large, imposing building,



into which I was hurried. Here I was taken into the presence of an officer, a tall man, with a wicked face, and immensely long mustache. He spoke to me in Russian. I answered him in English.

He spoke again, more fiercely, and when I answered, he drew his sword and with the flat of the blade struck me across the face.

"For heaven's sake find someone who can speak English!" I cried. "It is all a mistake. I am not the person you take me to be. I am an American! I——"

But he struck me again, shouting angrily. Then a bell sounded, and the two soldiers appeared and dragged me to a dark, dirty cell deep down under the building, reached by so many stone steps that I thought their end would never come. They thrust me into the cell and the door slammed behind me.

"Brace up, Gus," I murmured to myself. "You're in a bad fix, but you must show them that a New Yorker is no coward. A fellow can only die once!"

I did not think I spoke loud enough for anyone to hear, but I was mistaken, for instantly out of the darkness a reply came.

"Ha, ha! Since ven do you speak ze Ingles, Ivan Jouroma? Liar! You tell me you speak him not!"

"Who speaks to me?" I faltered. "I am not Ivan Jouroma. I am an American. I have been arrested by mistake."

"Ha! ha! ha! Very good shoke! You get not far ven you run away, my American! So, so! You cannot play the shoke on me. Speak Russian! Vat for you put on ze airs vit us? Ve all die ven de sun rises—so!"

At last, strange as it may seem, sleep came to my relief. When I awoke it was no longer dark. A soldier stood over me with a lantern. He was shaking me by the shoulder. Outside stood two more with a man in officer's dress. With them were two poor wretches, barefooted and clothed in rags. These had been my companions in the cell.

"For heaven's sake, listen to me!" I cried. "One of you spoke English in the night. I am not the person they think me. It is a mistake! Tell them! Tell them I am an American, a stranger in St. Petersburg. Tell them——"

"You vill not move me," spoke one of the prisoners in a low voice. "Ze yarn vill not vork. Be not a coward, Ivan Jouroma. You die with us!"

They conducted us to an empty vault where three empty coffins lay. Then placing me before the middle coffin, with one of the others on either side of me, they blindfolded all three of us.

Two rifle shots sounded and two falls followed. My time had come.

My heart beat furiously as I listened for the third report. Suddenly there was a rush and a loud shout. Then excited voices talking all about me were heard.

What had happened?

The suspense was terrible—worse even than death itself, I thought, when suddenly the bandage was torn from my eyes.

Before me stood a gentleman in citizen's clothes. "Are you Augustus Merrivale?" he demanded.

"Yes! yes! Save me! Save——"

"Stop!" he cried, seizing my hand. "I am here to save you. I am Count Stewiacke, your father's friend."

One minute later and it would have been too late. Count Stewiacke, whose power was second only to that of the Czar, arrived just in time.

It was curious, too, how it all came about.

I had started it myself, but I did not know that until the count told me when, later, we found ourselves seated comfortably at breakfast in his princely mansion, to which I was taken at once.

You see, I told my story at the hotel, and mentioned the count's name.

Although I was rejected, it occurred to the hotel clerk after I had left that I might have told the truth, and to offend Count Stewiacke would have been a very dangerous thing.

He therefore sent a messenger to the count to inquire if he knew any such person as Augustus Merrivale.

This brought the count to the hotel, and learning the circumstances, a detective was put upon my track, who succeeded in tracing me to that dreadful house.

Here the police were found in the act of arresting the inmates, and a young man was pushed forward as me.

Of course it was the man with the hatchet, and it might have worked if the count had not accompanied the detective.

Augustus Merrivale, able to speak no English, but only Russian, would not "go down" with Count Stewiacke at all.

Well, he was not all bad.

His name was Ivan Jouroma. He was a condemned Nihilist, who had in some way managed his escape.

When he found the game was up, he confessed and told the truth.

That is the way Count Stewiacke came to learn of my danger and how I happened to be saved.

All the rest remained a mystery. Who the two men were I never knew.

"You have had quite enough of Russian politics, my boy," was all the count would say, in answer to my questions. "Those fellows were expecting this Nihilist. They saw you in the street, and were struck with your resemblance to him. Therefore they took you up and—— But that is enough for you to know. Make my house your home. All that I can do to aid you shall be done."

Count Stewiacke was as good as his word.

Inside of two weeks I started on my return, with the \$75,000 safely deposited with a reliable banking house, which engaged to forward it to New York, and did so.

"I hope you don't leave us with a disagreeable impression of St. Petersburg, Mr. Merrivale," said Count Stewiacke, as he bade me good-by at the railway station.

I was polite in my reply. I thanked him for all his kindness, but I want you to understand I have no desire to see St. Petersburg again.

Every time I think of Russia I hear the crack of that fatal rifle, the thud of those poor wretches against their coffins; I see a figure rise up before me, and my heart seems to stand still—it is The Man with the Hatchet."



# PLUCK AND LUCK

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 29, 1922

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## ITEMS OF INTEREST

### WOMAN GET \$20,000 REWARD

Twenty thousand dollars, half of it cash and half in Los Angeles real estate, is the reward bequeathed Mrs. Jeannette Givens of Denver for being the good Samaritan to W. P. Quackenbush, whom she befriended in Kansas City a year ago. He was ill and she gave him what aid she could. He lived in Los Angeles.

### POLICEMEN CARRY LIGHTS IN GLOVES

The Hague Police Prefect has introduced a novelty in the regulation of traffic by night by supplying some policemen with the means of illuminating their gloves.

The policeman carries an electric battery on his belt, and when signalling to a motor car or other vehicle he presses the second and third fingers together. Contact is thus made and an electric lamp inside his sleeve lit. The lamp throws its light onto the white glove which constitutes an effective signal in the dark. By releasing the pressure of his fingers contact is broken and the signal ended.

### INDIANS BAR BOBBED HAIR

Princess Newana Gayfish, Winnebago Indian beauty of Hatfield, Wis., upset a thousand years of tradition and her own domestic life when she bobbed her hair and introduced her fellow-redskins to flapperism.

Her father, Chief Running Wolf, and her husband, Dan Grayfish, put on a war dance that made the silent forests sound like a reunion of boilermakers.

After the storm had cleared, Newana found herself an exile, so far as her relatives were concerned. But not being easily disturbed, she accepted her misfortune with a smile, and that evening she and her baby son turned their backs on the old reservation and went to Nebraska, where an uncle left her \$15,000 and a large tract of land. She will attempt to cultivate the land.

Newana is eighteen years old and has been married three years.

## OLD MAN NEEDLE WORKER

The champion fancy work artist of Canon City, Col., isn't a gentle, white-haired old lady.

The leading embroidery needle wielder is gentle and white-haired, but the artist is a "he."

O. Lundberg, seventy-eight years of age, claims the distinction of beating woman at her own pastime. His embroidery work and fancy needle accomplishments have taken numerous prizes at fairs and exhibitions in Colorado.

Lundberg, a resident of the Odd Fellows' Home, derives a lot of enjoyment from his needlework. Incidentally he has sold much of his wares to women who are unable to execute the intricate designs on linen as successfully as Lundberg.

Other inmates of the home profit by Lundberg's art as he has purchased magazines and newspapers for the entertainment of his comrades. Lundberg is self-taught and began embroidering only eight years ago.

## LAUGHS

Alice—What makes you think your new photographs are so horrid? Gladys—All my girl friends ask me for one, but my male friends don't.

Mrs. Dashaway—How long had you known your husband before you were married? Mrs. Gnaggs—didn't know him at all. I thought I did.

Mrs. Newbride—You'll not find me difficult to suit, Mary. Mary (the new cook)—I'm sure not, ma'am. I saw your husband as I came in, ma'am.

"You look just the same as ever," said the Dime Saving Bank. "Well," replied the boy as he shook the bank, "there appears to be no change in you."

"Why didn't you send your man to mend my electric bell?" "He did go, madam; but as he rang three times and got no answer he decided that there was nobody at home."

"They gave poor Bill just three years for sneezing." "For sneezing? How d'ye make that out?" "Well, he was cracking a safe and he sneezed and woke the watchman."

Johnson—Is it really true that your wife has left you? Jameson—Yes. And that's not the worst. "Why, what do you mean?" "I've just got a letter saying she's coming back."

"Now, Herbert," said the school teacher, "how many seasons are there?" "Do you mean in the United States?" "Yes, certainly." "Two." "Only two? Name them." "Baseball and football."

The New York girl, spending her vacation in the country, was complaining to the farmer about the savage way the bull regarded her. "Well," said the farmer, "it must be on account of that red blouse you're wearing." "Dear me," said the girl; "of course, I know it's awfully out of fashion, but I had no idea a country bull would notice it!"



## GOOD READING

### INCREASE OF HORSES IN CITIES

The Master Horseshoers' Protective Association is authority of the statement that the horse population of Philadelphia, now 24,000, increased 24 per cent. over last year; that of New York, which now has 72,000 horses, shows 12 per cent increase; and that of Chicago, with 51,000 horses, is 18 per cent. more than in 1921. It is claimed that all the other large cities of the country show increases in the number of horses. The explanation in the now generally accepted belief that horse-power is cheaper than auto power for short-haul work.

### ALBINO DEER SIGHTED

The first albino deer to be seen in the Adirondacks this season has been sighted near Amper-sand Mountain. Several hunters and others have seen the buck's ghostly outline and have been so startled by the strange creature that they have been unable to raise their rifles to shoot. Amper-sand Mountain marks a particularly rugged country which for many years has been productive of deer and other game. Dick Disco was one of the hunters to be suddenly confronted by the white deer. He admits that the sight of the big buck with its pure white hair and wide spread of antlers unnerved him.

### DEATH OF CAT LEAVES \$25,000 FOR DISPOSITION

A cat having died in Boston \$25,000 in thrown into the courts for disposition. Eighteen years ago Miss Elen F. Barnard left her estate in trust for her pets—seven cats, two dogs, two canaries, a parrot and a cockatoo. "Mewsey," a cat, survived all the rest, and stood in the way of succession to the estate by Mrs. Leslie Wood Bond, to whom it was to go on the death of the pets.

Now, with the cat gone, eight nephews and nieces, cut off with \$10 each, seek equal shares in the estate, contending that their aunt was of unsound mind and was influenced in making her will by Charles W. Bond, a lawyer, and by the subsidiary legatee, his wife.

### ALLIGATOR MAY BE SENT BY MAIL NOW

When is an alligator a harmless animal has been a much mooted question. Many still believe a young alligator a playful pet that can be kept in the parlor as a playmate for the baby. Others who have seen even the smallest alligator hang onto an amicably extended forefinger with the grim persistence of a steel vise may still be firm in the belief that it's best to leave 'em alone at any age.

The Post Office Department, however, has decided that alligators under twenty inches overall lengths are harmless. So are baby chicks, soft shelled crabs, blood worms, chameleons and baby terrapins. It is ruled that all these may be sent by mail.

For more than a year live fowl and domestic animals were acceptable for mailing when the complete journey was made by motor trucks, but this ruling was revoked more than a year ago.

Now only small live animals "having no offensive odor and requiring no food or water in transit," such as the ferocious animals mentioned, may be sent by mail.

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## LIVING OSSIFIED MAN A PUZZLE TO SCIENCE

Tony Medjeski, of Grand Rapids, Mich., a puzzle to science, has not a movable joint in his body, has not moved a fraction of an inch on his cot for nine long years, has been an invalid for two decades, and, although facing a slow and horrible death, says he has not enough time to live to be unhappy.

For Tony, who is 42, and one of the really few ossified men known to the medical world, is the personification of optimism, say attendants at the hospital here, where he is a patient.

When Tony was 13 he told his father chills in his spinal column annoyed him.

At 17 he was crippled and at 33 he was placed upon a cot, where he remains in the same position, year after year. Of late his jaws became joined, and a few days ago a dentist was called to extract one of the patient's teeth, that he might be fed by use of a tube.

Tony, with death not far away, manages to be happy with it all.

"Haven't time to be unhappy," he says.





## "The Best Hunch I Ever Had!"

"It happened just three years ago. I was feeling pretty blue. Pay day had come around again and the raise I'd hoped for wasn't there. It began to look as though I was to spend my life checking orders at a small salary.

"I picked up a magazine to read. It fell open at a familiar advertisement, and a coupon stared me in the face. Month after month for years I'd been seeing that coupon, but never until that moment had I thought of it as meaning anything to me. But this time I read the advertisement twice—yes, every word!

"Two million men, it said, had made that coupon the first stepping stone toward success. In every line of business, men were getting splendid salaries because they had torn out that coupon. Mechanics had become foremen and superintendents—carpenters had become architects and contractors—clerks like me had become sales, advertising and business managers because they had used that coupon.

"Suppose that I . . . ? What if by studying at home nights I really could learn to do something besides check orders? I had a hunch to find out—and then and there I tore out that coupon, marked it, and mailed it.

"That was the turn in the road for me. The Schools at Scranton suggested just the course of training I needed and they worked with me every hour I had to spare.

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Without cost, without obligation, just mark and mail this coupon. Do it right now!

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Without cost or obligation, please tell me how I can qualify for the position or in the subject before which I have marked an X:

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Accountancy (including C.P.A.)                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Service                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nicholson Cost Accounting                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk                               |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Blue Print Reading                          |
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Nuga-Tone is rich in Phosphorus, the precious element so necessary for strong, powerful nerves. It is this particular form of Phosphorus that soothes and quiets irritated, shaky, achey nerves and rejuvenates the nerves controlling the vital organism. It is valuable in nervous disturbances that cause poor memory, loss of nervous strength, sleeplessness, mental depression, nervous break-down, hysteria, neuralgic pains, or a constantly tired, "worn-out" feeling.

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Having found no buyers for the great group of battleships which the Washington Conference decreed should be scrapped, Great Britain is using the monsters as targets for the gunners of the Royal Navy.

Thunderer, Monarch, Conqueror, Colossus, Lion, Ajax, Centurion, King George V, Princess Royal, Erin and Orion, monsters of 20,000 or more tons, once the pride of the seven seas, are all doomed.

The navy is now engaged in a series of target tests on the famous battleships Agamemnon and Superb to determine how a direct hit can be prevented from passing from the turret down the ammunition tube.

In the Battle of Jutland, Invincible, Indefatigable and Queen Mary blew up because of a flash passing from the ammunition tube to the magazine below.

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